

“The Firefly Effect - Build Teams That Capture Creativity and Catapult Results”

Kimberly Douglas
(John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)

Summary by Bob Littell, Chief NetWeaver

Foreward – Why I believe this work is so significant – **Bob Littell**

You probably know the saying, “*You can’t be a prophet in your own land*”. It refers to the fact that we often find it difficult to recognize and appreciate persons, whom we already know and with whom we are already friends, who could have done something extraordinary. Seems like those persons have to be the ‘*expert from out of town with a briefcase*’ rather than someone right under our noses. I’ve known Kimberly Douglas for a number of years. Her year as President of the Atlanta Chapter of SHRM was when we really first met and got to know each other. Then we stayed as fairly close admirers of each other from afar until more recently when that relationship rekindled in some more collaborative ways.

When we got together to talk about her new book, “*The Firefly Effect*”, I was more than willing to meet and discuss it. When she gave me an autographed copy of it, I offered to include it as one of my **future** books in the series for my “**Don’t Need to Read the Book**” book club events. But then when she asked if I could create one of my summaries immediately, I agreed, but without having any idea what exhilaration I was in for.

This is an extraordinary book and I’m proud to have this ‘**prophet**’ in our land right here in Atlanta.

In some ways Kimberly expands upon ideas and concepts which I’ve already recognized and summarized in other great books like Daniel Pink’s “*A Whole New Mind*”, “*The FIVE Dysfunctions of a Team*” by Pat Lencioni, and “*Leading on the Creative Edge*” by Roger Firestone, and codifies them into understandable, practical strategies and along with steps for bringing out the creative juices that flow within all of us (i.e. *she lights up our lights* – speaking in firefly terminology). She helps us see that the real great team leaders are those who can create a great *esprit de corps* within the team, recognizing the personalities, talents, and strengths of every player and then finding ways to maximize them for the good of the team and the organization as a whole.

And don’t think that this book is only about ‘**how to become more creative**’. As Kimberly points out,

“My office is filled with books I have read on developing wacky, brainstorming prompts and driving organizational creativity. While many of these contain

great tips and tools for discovering new product ideas – and I have used them with marketing teams for that very purpose – regular business teams focus most often on finding effective ways to capitalize on business opportunities and solve tough challenges. I am not trying to incite a creativity revolution across entire companies. I merely want to provide tools that can help guide you down a path that will dramatically improve your team’s effectiveness.”

Congratulations Kimberly! You have done just that. And I sincerely believe that what this book offers which others I’ve seen on the topic do not, is the **practical advice** and **recommendations** Kimberly provides based upon her own deep experience - both being ON winning Teams - as well as some ‘**not-so-winning**’, as well as her **depth and breath of experience** in *facilitating team-building, strategic consulting, and team leader coaching.*

In the first part of the book Kimberly defines and describes the Firefly Effect in visual terms with which all who have ever participated in a firefly-catching activity – or just watched kids chasing them – can readily identify. Sorry for those of you in drier climates where fireflies can’t exist, but use your imagination.

In addition to this, in Part I of the book, Kimberly helps people ‘**rediscover**’ their own unique individual creative spark.

According to Kimberly in **Part II – “Creating the Right Environment”**- . .

“. . .consider the new direction and calling for leaders to create a fertile environment for breakthrough creativity and business results. An appreciation of the unique talents and perspectives of each member, along with an unshakable foundation of trust are critical elements of team development. Once this groundwork is laid, conflict takes on a completely new meaning when viewed constructively as creative abrasion that leads to incredible breakthroughs.”

In **Part III**, Kimberly focuses on *how do you get a group of individuals who likely have very different personalities, talents, experiences, and points of view to capitalize on their individual strengths?* You do this by **“Targeting Team Energy”**.

You provide. . . “a clear, common picture of the road on which they are traveling, the important mile markers, and guardrails for how we will work together.”

In **Part IV, “Firing on All Cylinders”**, Kimberly describes, *“how you gain an insider’s perspective on the secrets of powerful collaboration, including how to maximize your time together, reach decisions based on each person’s candid input, and to hold each other accountable for honoring commitments.”*

Part V, “Sparkling Creativity”, provides ways to do just this with what she calls “*creativity boosters, fixes for when the fireflies (aka creativity) don’t show up, and dealing with colliding team purposes.*”

Finally in **Part VI, “Sync – The Magic”**, Kimberly concludes with the power of synchronicity- when the team and the entire organization are in sync, how they can “*reach new heights and breakthrough performance*” never imagined before.

The book is full of metaphors and here’s a partial listing topics to be covered in that metaphorical vein:

- What to do when the fireflies don’t show up (or when creativity dries up)
- How to know when it’s time to find a new meadow (or a new approach, place, or process)
- What to do if the leader is keeping too tight a lid on the jar (and team innovation is gasping for air)
- How to get inventive when it rains on your firefly hunt (or parade of ideas)
- What happens when everyone is too busy to join in (and group problems remain unresolved)
- How synchronizing makes everyone’s light brighter (and how to tap into the power of synergized effort).

PART I – Rediscover Your Creative Spark

Chapter 1 – What Is the Firefly Effect?

Kimberly chose ‘**fireflies**’ as her defining metaphor - for this book and even before that, for her entire company - for a number of reasons. She sets these out in a way that makes it very visually powerful:

- *Few children chase fireflies alone. The excitement comes from the sharing of effort and results with others.*
- *Everyone is clear on what the goal is - to catch fireflies – and enthusiasm remains high, because their target is so well understood and so simple.*
- *Each individual knows his or her task. No one needs – or wants – a dictating leader.*
- *Children do not criticize one another on a good firefly hunt. Everyone is clearly giving his or her best effort.*

- *The group eagerly seeks out new and better ways to get to realize a successful result.*
- *In the end, there is joy in what they accomplished together.*

Her sequence for approaching the process of building team and organizational superiority makes complete sense.

Paraphrasing Kimberly’s overview of the entire book, “***First***, it’s about ***the individual*** – discovering *each person’s unique and creative talents and how to best apply these to enhance the group’s experience*. ***Secondly***, it’s about ***the leader*** – *how to be an almost invisible role model for inspiring others to do their best work*. ***Thirdly***, it’s about ***the team*** – using their individual talents *collectively to focus on the critical business challenges and opportunities, instead of focusing their attention inward on petty personal differences*. ***Finally***, it’s about ***the organization*** – *having achieved powerful results as one team, then becoming a spark for the change that’s needed in other parts of the company so that you’re all ultimately working with a one-team mindset*.”

Chapter 2 – The Individual – Creativity Found Again

According to Kimberly:

“. . .at their core, great teams are comprised of creative, committed individuals who are using their best efforts to reach a common goal. In fact, teams that solve problems and tackle challenges together have a special bond that’s not often found in other groups. And they don’t see these challenges as drudgery or something outside the scope of their work; they view it as the excitement and fun of being a part of a team”

But as anyone who has even run or been part of a team can attest, creating this kind of environment and having these kinds of positive and energizing results is easier said than done. On the other hand, anyone who has been fortunate enough to run or be part of a team that operates this way and has experienced the ‘**team bond**’ to which Kimberly refers, can tell you that it is indeed **real**.

The chapter begins with Kimberly dispelling several myths about creativity. I was especially drawn to an important distinction which Kimberly makes about her first myth which is closely aligned with what I encountered in my own journey with “**NetWeaving**”. Early on in my writing and speaking on the topic, I was occasionally challenged by persons who questioned whether NetWeaving was really just a form of ‘**disguised altruism**’ and not really genuine.

Fortunately, I stumbled across a book by a professor, Dr. Christine Renwick Monroe, “***The Heart and Art of Altruism***” which said we shouldn’t look at *altruism* as a static concept (i.e. you are either altruistic or you’re not), but rather as a *continuum*. That inspired me to explain that NetWeaving should simply be positioned towards the more

pure altruistic end of the continuum - what I refer to as “*enlightened self-interest*”. Your genuine motives are to help someone without immediate thought or expectation for how you would benefit, but you do so with a belief that, *what goes around, does come back around*..

Kimberly does an even better job with showing why we should look at creativity upon a **continuum**, rather than as **dichotomous** – *either you have it, or you don't*. Secondly, she says we shouldn't look at creativity as something we **do**, but rather as something which we **are**. Instead of judging our creative value to be based upon our ‘**output**’, look to the ‘**ingenuity of [our] thinking**’.

A third myth which seems to fall upon these same dichotomous lines is what Kimberly calls ‘**the lone creative genius**’. Concluding that the most brilliant among us should be allowed to carry and direct the entire creative process can prove to be counter-productive:

“Often when one or two individuals on the team are held up to be the creative ones, the remaining members shrink back to the sidelines, waiting to hear what's been decided. They believe that their job is to simply implement the ideas, not contribute in their formation.”

Kimberly explains that when we shift to looking at creativity in this much broader sense and give creativity credit to everything from ‘**cooking a meal in a creative way**’ to creating an ‘**inventive use for duct tape**’, we're demonstrating our uniqueness.

Kimberly's teenage daughter surprised Kimberly with her definition of creativity – “*To be original . To do something that no one else would think of*”..

“Wow – the power in that definition. Every one of us is by the very nature of our DNA – original, and thus unique, each having a different view of the world brought about by our genetic makeup and our own life experiences.”

One of the exercises which Kimberly suggests to rekindle your creativity is,

“Take a mental trip back in time and remember when you did something that made you feel creative. What did that look like? How did you feel?” What came easily to you? What could you do well that others couldn't? . . . “Recall those times where you did something well that elicited praise from colleagues, friends, parents, or even a stranger.”

In my own personal case, I vividly remember back in Grade School receiving accolades for having built a scale model of the scene at Appomattox Courthouse of General Lee surrendering to General Grant. I even remember a water color painting I did that won first prize back in Kindergarten. Hint: There were a number of ‘**first prizes**’ awarded – smart teacher, huh. **What do you remember doing that gave you real pleasure for which you received any kind of recognition?**

Kimberly also describes how in adulthood, some of these creative experiences translate into being *‘in the zone’*: “when you didn’t notice time passing or care how long it would take. Your energy and motivation grew as you got closer to achieving your goal. What were you doing? Where were you? Was anyone else there? What was the goal you were working toward?”

Kimberly also reminds us that one way NOT to discover your own talents and creativity, and that’s to focus on your weaknesses rather than your strengths.

“Yes you may need to mitigate extreme weaknesses that might keep you from being able to function, but spend more time on your strengths. This is where you’ll find your greatest energy and motivation, and it will come to you easier.”

Kimberly ends the chapter with a great personal story for how she discovered a “*guaranteed path to discovering your unique creativity*” – Since virtually everyone has certain ‘**strengths**’, Kimberly says:

“Use your inherent strengths to light the way. The creative aspect comes into play when you APPLY those strengths to the situation, goal, or opportunity before you.”

When a business colleague suggested to Kimberly that she should write this book, she at first ignored the suggestion since she didn’t see herself as an author – a professional writer. But when she reflected on the fact that she had previously written articles which had been published in professional journals, she began to realize that this idea of writing a book wasn’t that great a ‘**leap**’ after all. It was that ‘**spark**’ which eventually turned into a strong motivating force.

“Once you acknowledge that everybody, including yourself, has some natural creativity, then you will begin to act on it.”

“An effective team is composed of individuals who recognize their own creative talents. If you change your view of the word creative from a quality that is inherent (or not!) and unattainable[. . .] to one that’s more commonplace, and naturally present in each of us, then you too can rediscover your creativity.”

PART II – The Leader’s Role – Creating the Right Environment

Chapter 3 – The New Role of Leadership

Just as Kimberly helped us learn a new and different way to define and approach ‘**creativity**’, here in **Chapter 3**, she gives us a new way to look at ‘**Leadership**’ – and along with this – **what makes a great team leader?**

Kimberly references Daniel Pink from his great book “*A Whole New Mind*” – just as we did in one of our book summaries. Pink says that we are shifting from “**the Information Age**” to “**the Conceptual Age**”. And new skill sets will be required for leaders – such as *creativity, empathy, intuition and the ability to link seeming unrelated objects and events into something new different.*

Kimberly references the theme of the **2008 World Economic Forum** in Davos – ‘**collaborative innovation**’. And yet as Kimberly points out in another article from an April 28, 2008 *Business Week* article, across their entire surveyed population, only 30 percent said they were motivated to collaborate to accomplish a specific task, while 46 percent cited learning from others as motivation for collaborating. She also points out a statistic which I certainly hope will be a ‘**wakeup call**’ for my age generation. The survey revealed a **swing from 60 per cent of 18-24 year-olds** who said they liked working together to learn from others - **to only 28 percent of those over 65.** What a bunch of dullards!

Kimberly also reveals the REAL secret to collaboration. We should just obey the rules we learned in Kindergarten: “***no hitting and no biting rules***”.

In line with this Kimberly references Daniel Goleman’s great work “*Emotional Intelligence*” 1998. Goleman attributes **85-95 percent** of the difference between a ‘**good**’ leader and an ‘**excellent**’ leader to his or her **emotional intelligence**. It’s this ‘*sensitivity to emotional states (one’s own and others’) combined with effective relationship skills which are the critical competencies.*’

What she’s really saying is that to successfully accomplish group projects where collaboration is essential, ‘**misbehavior**’ needs to be eliminated and a ‘*safe, respectful environment where individual creativity can emerge to its fullest potential* (covered in Part II, Chapters 4 – 7) *needs to be created, and one where creative energy is focused in the right direction based upon the core purpose of the team and the targeted goals* (covered in **Part III, Chapters 8 – 10**).

Kimberly notes that like fireflies which can’t exist west of the Rockies due to the drier climate, in the same way, “***creativity cannot exist everywhere***”. And to create this innovative and collaborative environment Kimberly stresses that:

“Each member of your group must first acknowledge that not only is he or she unique and creative, but that every other person on the team has different strengths and talents, and that those differences have the potential to provide incredible value if capitalized upon.”

Spending quality time with each other is one of the ways Kimberly says this is accomplished.

But in addition. “...all members of the team must view conflict in a new way; not as a destructive inevitable evil, but rather as a constructive source of **creative abrasion**.”

Kimberly quotes Ed Catmull, co-founder of Pixar and the president of Pixar and Disney Animation Studios,

“What we can do is construct an environment that nurtures trusting and respectful relationships and unleashes everyone’s creativity. . . everyone feels that they are part of something extraordinary.”

The second role of the leader according to Kimberly is to:

“Find a way to target this creative energy in the right direction”.

Kimberly says the leader does that by:

- ***First, being clear about the role or purpose of every team member and by establishing guiding principles for how the members will work together.***
- ***Secondly, developing a common understanding of what success for the team means, and how it will be measured.***
- ***finally, creating a timeline with the major milestones which need to be hit in order to accomplish the goals, with well-understood accountabilities and inter-dependencies spelled out, as well as a process for monitoring progress and course correcting along the way.***

Chapter 4 – No Dissing the Red Quadrant

When Kimberly and I got together to first talk about her new book, I told her that one of the “NetWeaving” discoveries I had made over the past year was that for some, “NetWeaving” wasn’t enough. Other people evidently did not see enough in them that was ‘**unique**’ or ‘**remarkable**’ which would inspire them to risk returning the favor by referring or recommending their NetWeaver to someone the other person knew. I told her that has led me in the direction of helping people learn how to become more creative and innovative – especially a way they could create a ‘**personal brand**’.

As part of this, I told Kimberly that I believed that the **FIRST** step – especially for persons in their late 40’s, or 50’s or 60’s – should be to use one of the personality profile or assessment tools designed to help persons better understand the way they make decisions and other psychological preferences.

Kimberly almost laughed out loud since once again, we were in total sync along these lines. She started this chapter with a great analogy taken from Marcus Buckingham’s book, “***The One Thing You Need to Know***”. He said that “***Skillful***

managers are like great chess players; they know the unique strengths of each player on the team, and are able to use those strengths to their greatest advantage. Mediocre managers, on the other hand, play checkers.” (i.e. simply red and black pieces which all move the same).

Kimberly makes a great point concerning the ‘**familiar adage**’ that “*leaders should hire people who are unlike themselves*”. What she says is that “*Even when we get that part right [hiring someone opposite from ourselves], we then make the mistake of inadvertently – or even overtly - attempting to get these new hires to hide their uniqueness in order to fit in.*” And she carries this same idea into marriage. “*On a more personal level, we often see this occurrence in many marriages; opposites attract, right? But then you run the risk of spending the rest of your lives trying to change the very differences that first attracted you.*” Wonder if my wife will agree with that?

So how do you best start at identifying the various strengths of players on your team so that like the chess analogy, you can utilize the right people for where their strengths lie. Also, this process is necessary in order to avoid a natural tendency to want to shape people in our shadow:

“It is in our individual and corporate nature to try to deal with differences by eliminating them, and making everyone the same. However the new role of leadership demands that you not fall into this trap, or you will lose the every elements you need for collaborative innovation.”

In order to avoid this and to be able to celebrate our differences by recognizing them instead of eliminating them, Kimberly mentions the most common of the assessment tools like Meyers-Briggs, DISC and others, but her preference is for the Herrman Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) based upon the advantages she considers it to offer for identifying ‘learning styles’.

Pages 28 to 34 describe the HBDI and the four quadrants – Blue – “**Analyze**” – A; Green – “**Organize**” – B; Red – “**Personalize**” – C, and Yellow – “**Strategize**” – D.

Since it’s a proprietary system for which Kimberly has received permission to cover and because I couldn’t do justice to her explanation of it as well as the advantages she sees in it, I would simply recommend that you not only read this in the book yourself, but more information can be found at www.HBDI.com.

Oh, since the chapter is entitled “**Don’t Diss the Red Quadrant**”, I should at least let you know it’s not about ‘**dissing**’ them for breaking into a chorus of CumBaYa at the drop of a hat.

In addition to the grid and understanding in a more academic sense where you might fall, Kimberly uses “**The Diversity Game**” as a way to create comfort and prepare for the discovery of their actual HBDI results. “*It is eye opening and gratifying for all to hear that there is inherent worth in everyone’s method of thinking.*”

How about this for a convincing reason why Kimberly recommends this process as a great starting point:

“Do you know what happens when employees are recognized as unique with significant contributions to make? They become more engaged, work with passion and commitment, and feel a profound connection to their company.”

Chapter 5 – Beware the Ferocious Firefly

Kimberly begins the chapter by posing an interesting question which she admits when she poses it, usually results in a **split decision**. When asking whether ‘**trust**’ (i.e. a *two sided coin* in which there’s “*confidence in the integrity and capability of the other person*”) must be *earned*, or *is it there to begin with* until someone violates that trust and loses it? She covers **ways to earn trust** in this chapter and in the next one, “*how broken trust can be a source of destructive conflict – and how you can work to reestablish it once it have been damaged.*”

On the topic of the importance of establishing ‘**trust**’ as the foundation of relationship-building, Kimberly and I once again find ourselves in total sync. Those of you who are familiar with the NetWeaver’s “**Pyramid of Trust**” know that at the base of the pyramid, ‘**small talk**’ is that awkward stage when we first meet someone, and discussing the weather, sports, *how’s the family?*, traffic, the economy, etc. seems to be a fairly non-threatening way to get it going. Actually, whether you call it ‘**vibes**’ or ‘**body chemistry**’, there are things none of us understand, which lurk below the surface and that may unknowingly attract us to someone, or even make us a little stand-offish. Just being aware of this is important.

But, Kimberly and I both are careful to point out that if you let people stay in this ‘*small talk*’ mode, the relationship really doesn’t go anywhere.

The ‘**pinnacle**’ of relationship-building, as Kimberly would readily agree, is ‘**trust**’ and the question then becomes how do you go from this stage of knowing very little about someone, to the point where trust has been established and then maintained? And **are there ways to accelerate the process** or to **make it ‘stickier’**?

One of the most important keys for tearing down walls and silos within and among teams is to get to know other members at a deeper level and especially to appreciate them for what they each bring to the table.

Kimberly reminds us that “*instigating groupwide trust-building endeavors will ensure that trust is not confined with pockets – a tendency that can create alienating cliques*”. She notes that trust can be caused by simple proximity of desks or as a result of some team members having worked closely with each other over some extended period.

“ . . .there needs to be a broader umbrella of trust that covers all members of the same team. My experience has shown me that this strong foundation forms the basis of truly productive conflict.”

In this chapter Kimberly provides a number of great ‘practical exercises’ for establishing this groupwide trust.

In NetWeaving terminology, we would label these ways to ‘*inspire meaningful dialogue*’ in which you not only get to know the other person better, but to gain insight and to raise appreciation for them which leads to acceptance, and later allows you to bond.

Kimberly tells a great story about a presentation she once made to a group of CEO’s who wanted to learn how to better interact with one another . Kimberly had them one-by-one think of a leader who had had a profound impact on them. But, as she suggests, she gave them a few moments to think about this and to make some notes. *“Thus the introverts have had the opportunity to prepare; and the extroverts have been forced to prepare.”*

Another great category of exercises Kimberly uses during her facilitation activities involves ‘**food**’. Not only does Kimberly say she loves to eat – although you’d never know it by looking at her – she truly believes that food can be a wonderful team building tool.

“There’s something about breaking bread together that makes people feel that they have a different, more social relationship with each other”.

In a ‘get-to-know-you’ exercise, she uses M&M’s as a fun and easy way to prompt meaningful stories. People select their favorite color of M&M and then each color denotes a certain question. For example, **Red** might be “*What is your favorite vacation?*” **Green** might be “*What is your favorite movie?*” **Blue** “*Your favorite restaurant?*”

Read this entire chapter for more great examples of how Kimberly has shown how food can be a great way to build team rapport. My favorite example is a “*Milestone Dinner*”. Each person is asked to come to the dinner “*prepared to share two events or people who have had a significant impact on who – and where - they are today.*” Kimberly only does Milestone Dinners when she knows the group will be together the next day, “*so they will be able to look each other in the eye and remain comfortable with one another, in spite of what they might have shared the night before.*” She also says that it’s important that the ‘team leader’ go first and to set the tone with their *willingness to be vulnerable*.

As a surprising ‘aha’ from this exercise, Kimberly says how often she finds that members of the team have little knowledge of what other members *are accountable for* in their particular area.

“But how can team members be expected to care about one another’s work when they don’t even know what tasks others contribute to the overall success of the team?”

In the final section of this chapter, Kimberly explains two other great exercises which you should read on your own: **Recognizing Contributions** and a **Feed Forward Exercise** (**hint** – has nothing to do with food).

The first exercise is more obvious in its purpose – how to get persons to recognize and appreciate the contributions others make to the team. The second one – ‘**feed forward**’ is an interesting way to get team members to “*own up to a weakness and seek input from other members of the team – all for the purpose of their own improvement and for solidifying a stronger foundation of trust.*” (Read pages 44 – 47)

Chapter 6 – Conflict as Creative Abrasion. . .a Pearl, a Diamond, or a Mountain

Kimberly first distinguishes among three symbolic forms of “**creative abrasion**” (Jerry Hirshberg – President of Nissan Design International – originator of the term) in nature – a **Pearl**, a **Diamond**, or a **Mountain**. In a ‘negative’ sense a ‘pearl’ is the resultant of being an ‘**irritant**’ to the oyster (a sand pebble it keeps ‘**glossing over**’). Sounds like a good analogy to many conversations in which people are ‘*burying*’ or ‘**glossing over**’ conflict which exists. Kimberly likes the creative aspects of a piece of coal under heat and intense pressure, and over time, being transformed into a thing of beauty – a diamond. Or how about the movement of two tectonic plates of the earth shift as the result of volcanic action or an earthquake and which *come together* to create a spectacular mountain.

But how do you create a ‘*fertile environment for productive conflict*’ since it seldom happens naturally?

Kimberly suggests a path on which the leader must embark. . . to ‘*guide the way*’, and then every member of the team must follow:

Step One: *Sounds somewhat philosophical but it’s very realistic – that you have to instill a mind-set within the team that conflict is natural, expected and yes; even desired. This is creative abrasion thinking.*

Step Two: *Acknowledge and discuss conflict that is already occurring and determine its sources and impact. Is it ‘one-on-one’ between subordinates, between a leader and a subordinate, or is it teamwide? Is it an annoyance, or is it debilitating?*

Step Three: *Get serious about addressing conflict. Develop a plan and approach for resolving it, and hold people accountable for making this happen.*

The rest of this chapter breaks down these three steps with examples to show how each can be implemented. You'll want to read this entire chapter but here's a couple of points to expand upon each of the three steps.

1. Create or instill a mindset that conflict is natural, expected and even desirable –

- In order for conflict to be looked upon as a 'creative' and 'productive' rather than as a 'destructive' force, **trust MUST exist within the team.**

“In my experience, very heated, passionate exchanges ensue about alternative solutions, pros and cons, and choosing the right path. You can still leave the debate with respect for the other person – both their intentions and intellect – if you have a strong foundation of trust.”

- Diversity of talent and thinking styles is important and although like-minded and like-thinking teams may initially out-perform those with diverse members, studies have shown that in the long-run, *“those groups that were determined to be heterogeneous (thinking styles-wise). . . were initially dysfunctional and less productive; but once they learned to value and capitalize on the differences on their team, their productivity level soared past the same-minded teams.”*

2. Discuss and acknowledge conflict which is already occurring and

3. Get Serious about addressing conflict with a plan and approach for resolving it.

- *Many teams will claim that conflict really doesn't exist but it does.*
- *Sometimes it's necessary to eliminate members of a team who may be getting great results for the business but are doing so in ways that hinder or limit the team's overall level of trust and capability.*
- *If you have an employee that you think has some potential for success, then you have a responsibility to do what you can to help them change, or regain, their effectiveness. . . Then if the employee is not able to deliver, and you honestly say that you have done your best as a leader and coach to help them succeed, it is time for that person to move on. The most critical point here is to let them leave with dignity; for their own sake, and so that you don't alienate the other members of the team.”*
- **Kimberly describes 3 ways which she has encountered with teams in which trust is damaged or limited, and unproductive conflict emerges:**
 - *The individual who won't share personal information;*

- *Sarcasm disguised as humor*
- *One or more disengaged members of the team.*

There are several great examples Kimberly gives in this section including a ‘**personal**’ early-career learning experience of her own where SHE was the one who was encouraged to ‘**move on**’.(Pages 53 – 61)

Chapter 7 – Was It Something I Said?

Of all the analogies with ‘fireflies’ Kimberly provides in her book, the one in this chapter is my favorite:

“There is no wasted energy in the glow of a firefly. Incredibly, almost 96 percent of the energy that a firefly uses to create light is actually converted into visible light. Compare that to a typical light bulb, which converts only 10 percent into light and uselessly expends the remainder. Fireflies know how to shine without creating heat – without wasting energy on unnecessary conflict.”

Ironically, Kimberly borrows a page from the last book I summarized, “Crucial Conversations” in suggesting that we should begin looking at our differences more creatively and that should first ask ourselves when someone’s viewpoint is diametrically opposed to our own: *“What would make someone think or feel this way?” In Crucial Conversations”, the authors (Kerry Patterson et al.). . .”Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do what this person is doing?”*

They suggest not only trying to put yourself in the other persons’ shoes, but examine your own motives by asking yourself what YOU really want the end result to be which the authors describe as *“start with heart”*.

Kimberly returns to the explanation of the **Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument**™(HBDI) Model and person’s preferred communication styles and preferences (**Four Quadrants** – **Blue** – *“Analyzers”*. . . **Yellow** – *“Strategizers”*. . . **Green** – *“Organizers”* and **Red** *“Personalizers”* and she gives a terrific example of how to speak to others in a way that considers their dialogue preferences..

You’ll need to read this part (Pages 64 –68) yourself but I’ll try and give you some of the meat of how this works.

“For example, let’s say your team needs to make a difficult business decision. If you prefer the ‘blue’ Analyzer quadrant, then you want to hear the facts, the figures, and the bottom line – all in a brief, clear, precise format. If you have a preference for the opposite – ‘red’ Personalizer quadrant – then you want to discuss the context of the issue, the impact it will have on employees and other key stakeholders, what your gut or your intuition is telling you, all in a collaborative, face-to-face format.”

Kimberly suggests using the '*optimal flow for communication*' to help think through each step of how the conversation might progress:

In the Yellow quadrant – Strategizer – communication preference, "*Begin with a common goal that you and the person in conflict both have, even if it is just that this situation can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.*"

Move to the Blue quadrant – “Analyzer” – “*This is when you share the facts or the current situation as you see it*". . . “*Make it clear you are sharing the way you see it; but acknowledge that they may see it differently.*”

Then go to the Red quadrant – “Personalizer” – “*Ask your counterpart to respond to what they've just heard: “Do you see the situation differently” If so, how?”* Their response may be very emotional – ask yourself why might they be reacting this way.”

In the Green communication preference, “*Focus on the points of agreement, and determine what the next steps might be . If you are in a position to begin to discuss alternatives for addressing the points of disagreement, then you can move back into the Yellow quadrant for brainstorming.*”

Kimberly provides a great summary at the end of the chapter (Pages 72 – 73) which is really worth reading in detail. Here are the some of the key points she makes in handling a situation in a team meeting where conflict begins to surface.

- ***Remind everyone of your ‘creative abrasion’ philosophy and that conflict can be focused on the issues and not direct our passion negatively toward one another.***
- ***“Be hard on the issue, not the person”.***
- ***If things are getting too intense, take a brief break to give everyone some breathing room before resuming the discussion. When you reconvene, ask everyone to look for points of agreement, and then solve the disagreements together.***
- ***If the source of the conflict is a specific issue or problem, remind the team we are searching for the best solution, not a winner and loser. Look for a ‘third’ way.***
- ***Ask people to spend as much time understanding other people’s viewpoints as they do advocating their own. Consider asking them to paraphrase what the previous person said before voicing their own idea or opinion; or request that each person say what they like about another’s idea before giving any criticism.***

- *Make sure to keep the conflict a group issue, not a sparring match between two competitors. Encourage others to share their points of view, especially those who may have been silent up to that point.*

PART III – The Leader’s Role – Targeting Team Energy

Chapter 8 – One Team – One Picture of Success

Kimberly begins this chapter with my 2nd favorite firefly analogy: “. . .*like going on a firefly hunt. Everyone knows why they are there – to catch as many as you can. There is one clear purpose, one clear goal. Don’t you wish it could be the same for your team?*”

As another sign that Kimberly and I are drinking from the same glass of kool-aid, she exclaims how Pat Lencioni’s book, “*The FIVE Dysfunctions of a Team*” - another great book we’ve reviewed in our DNTRTB book club - had influenced her as it did me.

Leadership to me has always been one of those concepts which is difficult to describe but easy to recognize when you see it in action.

Kimberly describes a personal experience in which Roger Nierenberg travels around the country using his Music Paradigm as a way to demonstrate the power of (as Kimberly says) “*having the leader be in two places at one time – giving the vision speech at the front of the room, and hearing it in the audience like everyone else.*”

Nierenberg’s exercise involves sprinkling orchestra band members throughout the audience playing their instruments so that the audience experiences a sensation as if they are actually ‘in’ the orchestra – part of the whole. And as a special treat, Kimberly – with Roger standing behind her and guiding her hand – became the conductor.

But her observation after that is just as important, if not more so. Referring to the difference in appreciation the audience had for the orchestra as a whole, Kimberly says,

“Could they develop a deeper appreciation of how difficult it is for everyone to be on the same page with the vision? By the same token, I wish that every person in the audience – or on the team – could take on the role of the leader of the orchestra, even for just a few moments, to feel the awesome power and humbling responsibility of leading a group of virtuosos.”

Kimberly says there are two key components which drive powerful teams:

First, **where they’re going** and secondly **how they’re going to work together to get there**. The answers to these questions are inextricably tied.

“To what end do you want to capitalize on team members’ unique differences? You want to promote creativity and innovation targeted toward which business objectives, problems, or opportunities? Both Strategic planning and building team effectiveness require always having to keep a sharp focus on the business priorities.”

From here, Kimberly goes to give away her secret strategic planning process which she’s used for hundreds of teams over her 15+ years of facilitating, consulting, and coaching. She uses the metaphor of a **‘road’** which she also says makes it easier for people to remember:

- *The mission or role of the team is the road we are on.*
- *The mountain in the distance is our vision for success.*
- *The mile markers are the key milestones that will measure our progress.*
- *The guardrails are our guiding principles that will clearly lay out how we will work together to reach that mountain.*

In my opinion, the balance of this chapter is a terrific **‘road map’** for how to run a strategic planning session in a way that provides the greatest chance that the organization as a whole will buy into it and that the concluded actions to take will actually get implemented.

Here are a few ‘teaser’ questions to whet your appetite for just a few of the great advice and recommendations makes in the balance of this chapter:

- ***Where is it best to hold the meeting and who should be present?(Pages 81-83)***
- ***Who should the facilitator of the session be and assuming it’s not the team leader or perhaps even the CEO or head of marketing, where should the leader sit during the session and why? (Pages 81-83)***
- ***How should the meeting start and why is this a tremendous opportunity for the leaders to set the tone? What should that tone and message be so as to inspire the audience to want to be a part of this? (Pages 84-86)***
- ***Why are more companies opting away from ‘campaign slogans’ as an inspirational ‘vision statement’ which hangs as a plaque on the wall, but which doesn’t really impact behavior and what are more in favor of? (Page 88)***
- ***What is a “force field analysis” and why is Kimberly in favor of this ‘T Chart’ approach in lieu of the more typical “SWOT” analysis? (Pages 89-91)***

Chapter 9 – How Will You Know When You Get There?

Now that the team has a clear vision of the mission and is poised to take it to the next level, Kimberly says you need an action plan to make it become a reality.

Kimberly breaks this down into the following areas in order to know where to focus your attention and resources:

- *broadly communicate your plan*
- *follow-up on the progress being made*
- *celebrate your successes*
- *course correct*

The '*force field analysis*' from the previous chapter helped flush out the '**forces**' working **FOR** you, and those working **AGAINST** you. By identifying the key ones which are the critical priority areas – Kimberly refers to as '*big buckets of work that need to be done*' (e.g. *infrastructure, operations, marketing, products and services, finances, facilities, and more*), it becomes clearer where your actions need to be focused. Kimberly says, that at this point, they are only '**labels**' for the buckets not action steps to '**do**'.

Picking the three to five highest priority ones is critical and Kimberly reminds us that '**focus**' is the key. And that it's also just as important in strategic planning to decide what **NOT** to do as it is to decide what **TO DO**.

Here again, there's so much '**meat**' in this chapter, both for deciding upon the key areas upon which to 'focus' as well as how to launch the action plans that I will just provide some questions which should entice you to buy the book and read this chapter in its entirety. After all, it's only 9 pages. (**Pages 93 – 102**)

Some of the key areas I thought most important included:

- *Once you've reached a groupwide decision on the three to five top strategic priority areas on which you need to focus your attention and resources, why does Kimberly recommend breaking the group into clusters of two or three people with each group assigned to flush out the details?*
- *What are the advantages or disadvantages of having persons already knowledgeable on the area of strategic focus within their cluster vs. persons with no knowledge?*
- *What does Kimberly mean when she says you then need to decide what 'success' looks like for each strategic priority areas?*
- *Once you have established the timeline against which you are planning and a consensus has been reached on what success in each of the*

priority areas looks like, you have to establish some metrics to use so that you will actually know it when you achieve success. Why does Kimberly believe in establishing BOTH ‘quantitative’ as well as ‘qualitative’ measures?

- *What does Kimberly mean by tracking both ‘leading’ as well as ‘lagging’ indicators, and why is her example of the scientific tracking going on worldwide as to the significance of a dwindling of the world’s ‘firefly’ population a good example of both?*
- *After creating the metrics – which ones to track and how to do it, Kimberly says the next step is to create concrete action plans that includes key milestones, timelines, and accountabilities. Kimberly provides a specific process for doing this with sticky notes specifying NOT interim steps, but capturing end results?*
- *Unlike so many other processes I’ve seen, Kimberly recognizes these first steps in communication are not enough. She recommends a matrix (Pages 99 and 100) to confirm WHAT should you be communicating. . TO WHOM. . .and HOW?*
- *The final step in the process is to figure out how the team will follow up, celebrate successes, and course correct which partly involves regular and consistent progress tracking on the team dashboard and on the milestones in meetings- as Kimberly reminds us ‘what gets measured, gets done’.*
- *What does Kimberly mean in ‘course correcting’ by the need to ‘identify where the reality is falling short of plan, and why?’*

Chapter Ten – Guiding Principles as Guiding Light

OK, here’s my 3rd favorite ‘firefly’ analogy. Of the 2,000 species of fireflies, did you know that each species has its own ‘**unique signature of lighting**’. It could be the sequence of the flashes or the pauses between flashes – Kimberly says - almost like Morse Code. All these different lighting ‘**signatures**’ are how they communicate with each other and find the species of their own kind, literally as a form of survival.

Do you think Kimberly wishes that we humans were like fireflies? In other words, does she wish that we were pre-programmed to be able to communicate and collaborate with each other in a certain way? Absolutely not! Kimberly says that thankfully,

“We bring our own life’s experiences and expectations with us when we join a team. For us to work together at our best, we must develop a clear

consensus of what makes for an outstandingly effective team; and then we must have guiding principles to light our path to getting there and staying there.”

In this chapter (**Pages 103 – 112**) you’ll learn:

- *What are Kimberly’s two approaches which she’s used with teams to:
 - *ensure that there is a common picture of what makes a great team*
 - *how THIS team will work together to become great.**
- *The ‘Guiding Principles’ are the guardrails on our road – how we will work as a team and the means to the end.*
- *What does Kimberly mean by a team ‘visioning’ exercise and how does sharing experiences of the most frequently cited qualities required for the makings of a great team help to come up with the critical four to six guiding principles that will steer your individual behavior and your behavior toward each other? (Suggest reading Kimberly’s examples on Pages 105-106)*
- *After you created the four to six guiding principles, how does Kimberly recommend that you group brainstorm the barriers that might arise to how the team should address these?*
- *How do you deal with either a ‘leader’ who has too tight and sole control on the guiding principles, as well as the person who needs to be the center of attention which impacts the team’s performance?*

PART IV – Everyone Firing On All Cylinders

Chapter Eleven – Team Gatherings – Time to Shine

Kimberly provides some great tips for running meetings in this chapter and I’ll just highlight a few but whether you’re a team leader, a coach or consultant, or just someone who is a participant in a meeting, you’ll want to read this chapter in its entirety. (**Pages 115 – 128**)

- *the first step to improving your team meetings is to get everyone to agree on why you are even there in the first place. Kimberly says “What do I hear teams say they wish was the purpose of these meetings? To learn more about the strategic direction of the company; to develop their effectiveness, as a group, in identifying key problems and collaboratively solving them; to wrestle with longer-term issues and reach critical decisions that will impact the priorities and plans of the team.”*

- *Step two is then to design the agenda so that it is in alignment with your stated desired purpose.*
- *Learn how Kimberly uses the HBDI preferences (Chapters 4 and 7) to actually redesign the staff meeting. I can see how this one would be a lot of fun but Kimberly cautions that, “One of the unintended consequences of engaging in this type of exercise is the potential realization that you need to schedule additional meetings, each of which are designed to serve different purposes.” (Pages 116-117)*
- *Learn why Kimberly recommends first ‘designing the ideal agenda based strictly on what you learned from the discussions about the purpose and meeting the desires of the participants, regardless of how long or how often you meet now. (Page 118)*
- *What are the two purposes Kimberly describes for having teams color-coordinate the agenda items to correspond to the four quadrants of the HBDI Whole Brain model? (Pages 119-120)*
- *What are some of the other ‘easy-to-implement agenda design tips’ Kimberly offers including ‘time box’ and putting the most critical topics first? (Page 120)*
- *After setting the agenda, Kimberly says it’s time to focus on what is happening when you actually have everyone together. She describes three dysfunctional behaviors which have the greatest impact on the effectiveness of the meeting and how to deal with each one: 1) a lack of participation – especially someone who routinely arrives late, as well as ways to create participation within the entire group, even when some of the participants are ‘virtual’ participants – offsite (Pages 120 – 124); 2) a single person dominating the meeting (Pages 124 – 126); 3) not starting and ending on time.*
- *What two things does Kimberly recommend doing at the end of a team meeting in order to ensure maximum impact and effectiveness? (Pages 127 – 128).*

Chapter Twelve – Team Decisions Fact or Fiction?

In order to determine how effective and how often Team decisions are actually made, Kimberly recommends this type of a survey within members of the team – *ask participants to remember and jot down their thoughts about the last time this team had a really great discussion that resulted in a very effective decision. Then list all of the factors that contributed to the effectiveness of this discussion and decision.*

In a number of situations, Kimberly finds that team members have little to jot down because they can't remember many if any situations where effective decisions have been made. Instead they simply assign it to someone off-line to deal with it there.

Most of this chapter is dedicated to ways that Kimberly has found to improve the decision-making ability of your team. Here are a couple of my favorites and the rest you will find between Pages 129 – 145.

- **Previously Kimberly stressed the importance of creating a ‘safe’ environment: “One that allows a diversity of opinions to be heard”. I liked this quote:**

“Research shows that when people get to do the work they do best more often, superior productivity, discretionary effort, engagement, joy, retention, and loyalty result. Great teams play to their strengths; they clearly know who the competition is, and keep their sights focused on what they do and how to defeat them. They expend as much effort as they possibly can to being their best as individuals, a team, and an organization.”
- **What are “conflict norms” and why does Kimberly feels it’s important for the team to create them? (Pages 133 – 136)**
- **One of the ways Kimberly recommends for helping groups determine how groups will make decisions is “Vroom-Yetton”. It Provides the leader with a thought process for determining the optimum level of involvement of others in the decision, which will then allow the leader to make that rationale explicit to the team. (Pages 137 – 140)**
- **Kimberly points out that an important problem to watch out for is ‘preconceived decision-making’. Instead of remaining open to a wide variety ideas before making a final decision, there is often a lot of jockeying for position that occurs beforehand to save time instead of truly coming to learn about potential, viable alternatives.**
- **Kimberly describes two procedural techniques which she believes go a long way toward ensuring a lively discourse on alternative solutions. (Pages 141 – 142)**
- **One surprising issue Kimberly points out on page 143 is that sometimes she finds that teams don’t know when they have actually made a decision: “I truly believe that everyone reaches a point when they are just talked out, and most team members simply hope that someone else has taken action based on the dialog in which the team has engaged.” As Kimberly says, “Don’t count on it”. How does Kimberly suggest that you know whether or not a decision has been made?**

- **Kimberly says that the final step in the plan of action for implementing the team’s decisions involves asking the question, “Who is not in the room that needs to know what we just decided?” Why is this so important, and after determining who the stakeholders are who will be impacted, what are the best ways of communicating it to them? (Pages 144 – 145)**

Chapter Thirteen – What to Do if the Leader Is Keeping Too Tight a Lid on the Jar

I think I’m on my 4th favorite ‘**firefly**’ analogy but this is another great one because it also answers one of the mysteries I found as a kid chasing and capturing lightning bugs in a jar. Even with breathing holes punched in the top, I would notice that over time, there ‘**flicker**’ would grow dimmer and dimmer. Kimberly says,

“Held captive in the jar, with no means of escape, their light begins to fade until eventually there is no light at all. . . The firefly doesn’t die, not right away, but it doesn’t thrive either. This glow was not meant to be bottled up and kept for the delight of just one person. It is in the DNA of this tiny firefly to be free and shine its light for all to see and enjoy.”

Kimberly suggests that we humans are much the same and she poses this question to leaders at all levels:

“Are you a leader who is reading this to learn how to better manage your own behavior in order to elicit creative ideas on your team, and enable better decision-making? Or, are you one of the members of the unfortunate team who really gravitated to the title of this chapter, especially the part about too tight a lid?”

This is a short and easy-to-read chapter either for leaders who are pretty good at allowing an open dialogue and decision-making process, but who want to avoid some of the pitfalls they have unknowingly fallen into, **or** for those leaders are willing to admit that they **do** tend to dominate meetings often causing a deafening silence among most of the participants except perhaps among a few ‘**brown-nosers**’ anxious to be seen as supporting the “*King who is wearing no clothes*”, but doesn’t realize it. (Pages 147 – 155)

Chapter Fourteen – Shining the Light of Accountability

Kimberly begins this chapter sharing another of her words of wisdom based upon her experience:

“I have discovered that accountability is a subject best viewed through three separate lenses – personal responsibility, the role of the leader, and the team’s collective accountability.”

- Why does Kimberly suggest that a good way to approach the complaint within a team of a lack of accountability is by asking each person *to remember a time when they saw an outstanding example of someone taking accountability or being answerable for their actions?* (Page 157)
- For more information on ‘**personal accountability**’, Kimberly recommends the book “*QBQ: The Question Behind the Question*” by an organizational development specialist John Miller. She says that Miller writes (paraphrasing), “*Rather than taking the easier ‘victim who blames others’ approach*”, he suggests “*taking ownership and action by asking “What can I do to improve this situation?”*” Miller also makes an interesting distinction between ‘**correct**’ and ‘**incorrect**’ questions. He suggests **incorrect** questions begin with “*Why*”, “*When*”, or “*Who*” whereas ‘**correct**’ questions begin with “*What*” or “*How*”. It’s interesting to learn why he says this. (Page 158)
- Although Kimberly believes that accountability begins at the ‘**individual level**’, she adds that it is the role of the leader to **demonstrate** and **reinforce** it. Kimberly explains several ways to do this as well as some tips on recognizing and rewarding persons and teams when they have successfully achieved their goal. (Pages 160 – 162)
- Turning now to the leader’s role in reinforcing ‘**team responsibility**’, Kimberly says one of the most important ways to do this is to “*keep the team focused on the real competition; those who exist outside the walls of the organization, trying to win their customers over every day. Team members can unleash their creative juices on solving the real problems of the team and the broader business. Making this the focus keeps people from clashing within the group. When this focus is lost, infighting and bickering among the team members thrives. It’s no longer us against them; it is us against us.*”
- In line with the final area – the team taking accountability for team decisions, Kimberly suggests asking “*Is there a clear outcome or next step that is understood by all? When two or more members take a conversation off-line, how will the team know if the issue is ever resolved, or learn the results and rationale for any decisions made?*” (Pages 166 – 167)

PART V – Sparking Creativity

Chapter Fifteen – The Firefly Chase Begins

This chapter is all about creating the ‘**creative spark**’ within individuals and the team to ‘*intentionally trigger that reaction*’. . *when people come together, with a compelling goal, new blood, a critical problem to solve – something to jump start the*

team. Kimberly says she has seen it happen: ***“people can truly glow with energy when they get to use their brain and creative talents to work together to solve the most difficult problems, or capitalize on the most exciting opportunities facing the team and the business.”***

Kimberly makes this important point: ***“No longer is creativity solely within the purview of the research and development, marketing, or design departments. The best companies realize that the drive for imagination and innovation needs to permeate throughout the organization. This is where the true competitive advantage lies...”***

Here are some of the areas you’ll want to spend some time reading on your own from this chapter:

- Why is that **during the tough times, leaders tend to exert great control the organization and keep decision-making at the highest levels when the research shows that groups make better decisions than individuals.** (Page 172)
- ***According to consulting firm BlessingWhite, Inc. in a recent survey, 40 percent of respondents claimed that their managers never encouraged them to look for new solutions or to take risks, with another 34 percent saying that they were rarely encouraged.***
- ***Kimberly provides her simple yet very effective problem-solving or opportunity-finding process:***
 - 1) ***Begin with a very clear, specific problem statement.***
 - 2) ***Briefly discuss to make sure there’s common understanding.***
 - 3) ***Search for solutions [or approaches if it’s an opportunity]***
 - 4) ***Evaluate the ideas.***
 - 5) ***Implement the chosen alternative.***
 - 6) ***Assess the results and course correct as needed.***
 - 7) ***Learn from the process, and apply to next problem [or opportunity]***

The balance of the chapter covers these steps in more detail. **(Pages 171 – 183) A few of my favorites include:**

- ***“Make sure the problem is small enough to solve”.*** In other words don’t tackle ‘create world peace’.
- A reminder of the **‘ground rules’** for a successful **‘brainstorming session’** (Page 179)
- After coming up with ALL the ideas, ***Kimberly suggests a 10-minute break before tackling ‘evaluating the ideas and selecting the top***

solutions to recommend for implementation’. You will find, if you read page 180, two reasons why Kimberly explains it’s even better if you can take a break of a few days. (Page 180).

- *Of most importance according to Kimberly is “. . .to have clear criteria upon which all can agree and understand for making the evaluation and your team needs to identify these before you start discussing the ideas.”*
- *As you’re evaluating ideas, why does Kimberly say it’s important to remind team members to keep a both/and mind-set versus an either/or one? (Page 181)*
- *How does asking team members to take on the role of another key stakeholder (such as a key customer or the CEO) and brainstorm ideas from that perspective, help them seek ‘the third way’ as opposed to ‘your way’? (Page 182)*
- *How does creating timelines and major milestones with all members of the team present, and not going out more than 90 days (large change projects excepted), help? (Pages 182 – 183)*
- *And if there’s failure, what does Kimberly say the role of the leader need to be? (Page 183)*

Chapter Sixteen – How Could You Forget the Toys?

Having never been in one of the Kimberly’s meetings she conducts whether it’s a brainstorming or more specific problem-solving meeting, I now want to be in one since I found out she passes out engaging ‘toys’ to everyone.

“This not only keeps participant’s hands busy, while surprisingly releasing distracting nervous energy and allowing their minds to remain engaged in their work. The toys are my way of reminding them to keep their minds open and to feel free to explore, just as we did as children. Entering a room to see the fun props all laid out incites a mind-set shift, and the realization that this is not going to be a boring meeting.”

And what about a more ‘serious’ meeting?

“. . .toys help me to create an environment that people want to be a part of. I have facilitated all types of meetings, and the more dreaded or awkward the meeting topic, the more – and better – toys needed.”

Kimberly reveals two tools which she uses extensively with teams to help them generate a great deal of ideas in a short period: *“The Mind Map is geared toward*

freeing up the left-brain thinkers; and Brainwriting is designed to give some structure and focus to right-brain thinkers.”

For a complete explanation of how **Mind Mapping** works *as an individual brain-storming method to encourage all group members to think freely about the same problem at the same time without fear of interruptions, distractions, or the domination by some members of the group*, read **pages 188 – 189**.

For a complete explanation of how **Brainwriting** works and *how it allows each person to view the problem from their own unique perspective and to encourage them to build on and improve the ideas of others*, read **pages 189 – 191**.

Although Kimberly doesn't use the **“Decision Matrix”** approach nearly as much as these first two, she has found it ideal for more complex decisions. She also prefers the **“Impact versus Effort Grid”** since it's easy to use right away and there's no need to create criteria as there is with the Decision Matrix. Read **pages 191 – 194** for the **Impact vs. Effort Grid** explanation and **pages 194 – 198** for the **Decision Matrix** explanation.

Chapter Seventeen – This Place Is a Zoo

I will let you read this ‘fun’ chapter on your own describing types of team-building events which are different from those more traditional **‘ropes courses’** or **‘blindly falling into your teammates arms and trusting them to catch you’** exercises. Kimberly says, **“I’m talking about those excursions that truly create lifelong lessons and connections that you can immediately apply to improve your performance as a team and a business unit.”**

Read to find out the kind of lessons teammates learned going to the San Francisco Zoo where Kimberly went; a jazz club; an emergency room at a hospital, or a fire station, an airplane and automobile assembly line, a 360-degree landscape excursion to see how products were being displayed and how consumers were reacting to them; sailing in January – windy and 30-degree temperatures culminating in **“Blackbeard’s Regatta”** pitting teams against each other which required applying lessons they had learned. And what do you do when the leader doesn't want to participate in the **‘firefly chase’**. Read **Pages 199 – 204**.

Chapter Eighteen – When Sparks Collide – Dealing with Interteam Conflict

Wouldn't it be nice if everything Kimberly has talked about up to this point could be accomplished in a vacuum – meaning that in most cases, you're not talking about getting a **‘single’** team to work together to **create, collaborate, innovate and bring about productive changes**. There are multiple departments, multiple teams in the same areas such as IT, various areas involving logistics, etc. This chapter is all about how to deal with the expected levels of conflict which arise when you think YOUR team is

performing great. . .and it's those other 'slugs' which are causing all the problems. The problem is that those 'slugs' are saying the same thing about YOUR team.

In this chapter, you will read some terrific real-life examples of how Kimberly has resolved these conflicts. In one case which brought near-tears to my eyes, how she won over a group of teams – all IT personnel - who had no “**Red**” (HBDI) category members within the entire population (or at least no one who would admit to being dominant in that ‘**emotional**’ quadrant). It was moving to read about the post-meeting present they gave Kimberly which you’ll laugh about as I did. Read **pages 205 – 209**.

In a separate story, Kimberly reveals a valuable lesson she learned as the result of a mistaken assumption up front – allowing members of the planning committee, made up of persons who were **not** key decision-makers - to convince her to run the meeting their way. Luckily during the first 30 minutes, Kimberly recognized how unsuccessful things were going, she had the wisdom to put her neck in the noose and ask the group of decision makers. . . “*How is this process working you?*” You can guess what their answer was.

What did she learn?

“Be crystal clear on what the key stakeholders want to achieve, and let that be your guiding light as you plan the content and process of the session. Don’t let certain assumptions, especially unproven ones, cloud your better judgment. Always test them, especially if they are getting in the way of your success. Have the courage to say out loud what you feel in your gut – “Is this working for you?””

To learn about Kimberly’s **Three-Step** ‘*keep-it-simple*’ **process improvement method**, read pages 212 and how she applies the HBDI model to accomplish **optimal flow** for communication, read pages 216 – 218.

One of my favorite paragraphs in this chapter reads:

“Too many times, I see team leaders fool themselves into thinking that the people in their organization don’t know how they feel about the leader of another department, but that is almost never the case. While some may be more politically correct than others and don’t directly bad-mouth their peers, the subtle message is just as damaging. So before I ever bring the actual departments together, I first arrange for the two leaders to meet to make sure they really want this session to be a success. How they kick off the session – not only their words, but the passion with which they speak them – will oftentimes set the stage for what will happen the rest of the day. Of course, the actions that follow their words had better be in sync, or they run the risk of losing not only the trust of the other department, but their credibility within their own team.”

PART VI – Sync – The Magic

Chapter Nineteen – There’s Something Going On in My Backyard!

This chapter makes a convincing case for why innovation and creativity need to become Standard Operating Procedures for any company who wishes to be successful in this current environment. Kimberly has another informative ‘**lighting bug**’ story about *synchronous fireflies* (their blinking lights going off in orchestrated unison), thought once to only exist in Southeast Asia. That was UNTIL an amateur naturalist in the Tennessee woods recognized and reported to a researcher, who corroborated her sightings, a phenomenon dismissed by other experts as being impossible.

Kimberly explains:

“What this story shows us is that a single person has a substantial amount of power to truly make a difference in an organization by first believing in something, and then taking action on it. You can be the one person who sees the possibilities out there, who can be one of the early adopters.”

Kimberly references Google’s procedure of allowing their employees “*to spend 20 percent of their time working on a project that makes their light shine, so to speak.*”

The message here is that **every** company should have some kind of process in place to stimulate and then tap into the creativity and innovation potential from **every** employee, not just from the R&D or marketing areas.

In the rest of this chapter, Kimberly gives examples and ways that leaders and teams should think of themselves as brain trusts. For example, Kimberly recommends that, “*staff meetings be touted as a meeting of your board of advisors, where people freely solicit and give advice on how to deal with a problem or challenge they are facing.*” She likes the term even better, a “*Creative Brain Trust*”.

Chapter Twenty – Change Is Not a Four-Letter Word!

This entire book is loaded with great ideas, concepts, strategies, and action steps. But, since most companies and team leaders reading this recognize that they fall somewhere along a **continuum of acceptance and implementation** of these from – **already doing a number of these or something similar** to the other extreme – **this is all new to us**, the one thing missing ingredient is a ‘**willingness to change**’.

As Kimberly says,

“I truly hope that if you have read this book all the way through to this point, then you are on fire, so to speak, to instill a creative, collaborative culture on your team – one where everyone is actively engaged in driving the objectives of the business. Change must take place for any new strategic direction to be

fully executed. If this vision for the future remains solely your own and not that of your teammates, then it cannot possibly be fully accomplished.”

She quotes Peter Senge, *“People don’t resist change. They resist being changed.”*

Kimberly makes some great points in this chapter about the leader of the future,

“..there is no visible leader among the fireflies, even when they are synchronizing their flashes. . .just as there is no room command and control in today’s fast-paced environment. The leader of today, while not invisible, is not obvious and showy in his leadership. I don’t even like the notion of empowering your team, because I feel that it gives leaders a false sense of security by convincing them that they possess power to bestow upon others. While you might have the authority to force compliance, it is not within your power to force commitment.”

“The team leader’s job, therefore, is to create the fertile environment and clarify the landscape so that everyone knows what is important. Set the stage for the team’s success, and make effective functioning a priority. People can then make their own decisions – from compliance to commitment, from forced effort to discretionary effort – based on the best possible information that you can give them.”

“This is about leaving a leadership legacy and being a role model for what great management looks like in their organization. I am encountering more and more executives whose desire to leave a lasting impression on the company isn’t based on achieving an outstanding execution of a particular strategic initiative or making a merger bring the expected value to the company. Rather they are truly concerned about raising the bar for the quality of leader that their company produces. And one of the most critical roles for the leader of the future is – and will continue to be – as a change agent.”

And probably of all the skill sets which Kimberly sees necessary for leaders to be this ‘change agent’ of the future is being able to **communicate** – *constantly* and *effectively* – and to large audiences – in a town hall meeting setting to employees about ‘**change**’ and their need to embrace it at all levels.

Kimberly reiterates the value of the HBDI ‘**optimal flow**’ communication model from Chapter 18. Read **pages 236 and 237** for a good reminder of how this can be effectively used in communicating ‘change’.

And for a fun exercise and approach to introducing a critical change initiative, read **pages 238 – 239** to learn about ‘**collages**’ – something about which Kimberly was at first skeptical, but is now a big fan of them, in the right circumstances.

So should we be concerned that we are having an aging workforce ‘**baby boomer**’ population, and if it is true that we resist change more as we get older, should this be a concern? True for those who resist change, but not true for those who accept and embrace change..

Kimberly quotes from an HR Magazine article on neuroscience research that shows:

“ . . . humans exhibit something called brain plasticity that allows us to constantly learn and change. Whereas the accepted wisdom used to be that our brains were hardwired very early in life, scientists are now aware that ‘the brain of a 71-year-old is the same as the brain of a 17 year-old in its ability to make new connections. Unfortunately, most people stop learning meaningful new concepts around age 30, and the brain’s ability to learn begins to shrink.’ ”

So in conclusion, Kimberly says,

“It is the leader’s role to shore up the team and the change effort when the going gets hard. It is also the leadership job to take drastic action and hold people accountable if they can’t get on board and support the changes that need to happen. If the leader has created a compelling case for change and provided the tools and support that’s needed – and can look themselves in the eye and say that they have done all they can to help this person make the change – then it is time to let them leave with dignity.”

“It is equally important to send the message to others on your team as well that refusing to make the change is not an acceptable alternative. Be sure to spend your limited and valuable time and mindshare on those who can and will accept the change; not the ones who need to get off the bus because they don’t like the new direction in which it is going. Leadership is about knowing how to distinguish from these two alternatives, and about finding an attainable middle ground.”

Chapter Twenty-One – The End of the Day

I once again congratulate Kimberly on producing what I believe will become a timeless book of wisdom and practical advice for team leaders - whether that be a department head or the CEO or any C-Level executive within a company, as well as outside consultants and executive coaches challenged with helping leaders confront and conquer problems, take advantage of opportunities and deal within a new environment experiencing an ever-accelerating rate of change.

She leaves us in this chapter with her hopes for this work to become a ‘**call to action**’: *“As I write this book, I feel a tremendous sense of urgency to help individuals and team leaders to take a look around – at their teammates, co-workers, colleagues, and significant others. What is going right before you that you have not noticed before*

Do you believe you are the only one who wants to find great meaning and purpose in your daily moments and your life's work? The odds are that you aren't alone. But you must take the risk of believing that it is possible to make a difference, and that you do have it within you to cause a change, even if it is as small a change as that caused by the proverbial wing of a butterfly."

You MUST read the balance of this chapter in order to refresh your mind on the points which Kimberly feels are some of the most important. Kimberly suggests that after reading these,

"Take the first step on the path to change, and simply start where you are. Your life and the life of your team can be different because of the actions you take. Pull out a sheet of paper. Write down just one thing from the list above that you really want to do – not what you think you should do, but something you want to do. Put your creativity to work to figure out how to get it done. Put a due date on it. Share it with one other person that you trust. Hold yourself accountable for achieving it. If you are the leader of a team, be the role model of someone you would want to follow. When you feel the positive reinforcement that one action causes, you will want to do it again. Start a movement – make it happen!"

With my connection with the Pay It Forward movement, I find it ironic that in Kimberly's last paragraph, she professes to be an avid believer in the power of '*paying it forward*':

"You can recapture a lost dream and make a difference in the world."

I sincerely believe you have helped people do just that with your book Kimberly and you've made me want to get out a jar and go someplace where I can relive the energy and excitement of going on a firefly hunt. **Anyone else want to join me?**