

Entry to Innovation: Pfeil Center Teaches the Basics

Steve sits down with a blank piece of paper and a pen, his boss requesting that he come up with four ways to save the company money. The boss howls, “Be innovative and creative in your ideas!”

“Easier said than done,” thinks Steve and his co-workers.

In this case, Steve’s not real, but in times of tight bottom lines his plight is common enough.

And it’s not Steve’s fault that he doesn’t grasp the concept of innovating. Organizations are turning inward to discover ways to save money and increase efficiency. And while fostering an environment of innovation is top of mind, company leaders aren’t always aware that employees need to be trained and educated on how to craft those new ideas.

That’s where the Pfeil Innovation Center in South Bend comes into play.

“Phil (Newbold, CEO of Beacon Health System, the new name of the parent structure for the combination of Elkhart General Hospital and Memorial Hospital of South Bend) had this vision of doing innovation immersion, two-day workshops where you learn about three

key things: how to think about (innovation), how to get started and how to implement innovation,” states Matthew Krathwohl, executive director of innovation for Beacon. “Dick Pfeil is an entrepreneur who is passionate about job creation and he came along and provided a generous founding financial gift that made this (possible).”

He explains the center’s mission as having three “doors” to open, with the first two focused on finding greater efficiencies (cost cutting, etc.) and restructuring (right-sizing, reorganizing, the code for layoffs, etc.), respectively.

“The mission is to help organizations of all types develop a competency for innovation to arrive at our preferred future – that’s the future that really includes changing the economic trajectory. The purpose is door No. 3, which is job creation, growth for all types through innovation,” he outlines.

The two-day immersion course costs \$150: A “Ritz Carlton experience, but at Walmart prices,” touts Krathwohl. Attendees learn about culture change and the three C’s of innovation: competency, culture and courage.

Since the center opened in 2011, there have been 14 two-day courses (as of press time). The ultimate goal, Krathwohl says, is to have 5,000 organizations go through the program. Facilitators ask for a group of five to attend from each organization – including the senior-most person at the company.

“We dispel a lot of commonly-held beliefs. Research shows we all have the ability to increase our capacity (for innovating). ... We talk about the case for innovation and quickly move into

how to get started. That is a differentiator for Pfeil – you’ll know what to do Monday at 8:05 a.m.,” he offers.

And it doesn’t matter how big the company is, Krathwohl says. What matters is that the time is now to affect job creation and economic security.

“Regardless of size, you can make a difference. At the center of it all ... (innovation) is meant to be a word that has a call to action to it. It’s a call to action that we don’t have the luxury of time anymore. There is no white knight coming. These are new tools to get to that preferred future,” he adds.



What is innovation? Groups of five from companies across Northern Indiana come together for a two-day immersion course to learn the ins and outs of how to innovate and bring those skills back to the office.

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Matthew Krathwohl, Pfeil Innovation Center, at www.wakeupandsmelltheinnovation.com