

Management Strategies

**Timely—and Timeless—
Advice for Solving Typical
Management Problems**

Second Edition

*Joseph J. Bannon
Kim S. Uhlik*



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SAGAMORE  **VENTURE**

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This book is dedicated to you, the reader, who strives to manage and lead with courage, integrity, and intention.



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I must thank the many people and organizations with whom I have worked as a consultant, for they have taught me much about management and leadership. I am deeply indebted and grateful to those who have inspired the many topics in this book.

Joseph J. Bannon, 2018

Like Joe, I am indebted to everyone with whom I have had the pleasure to work, including colleagues at Kent State University, San Jose State University, NRPA, CPRS, OPRA, NMPRA, the former SPRE, and parks and recreation departments in Kent, and Ravenna Ohio (and their respective school districts).

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Kim S. Uhlík, 2018

Foreword

When we began to revise the original *911 Management* book, we realized that much had changed since 1999, but also that much remains the same. Organizations continue to need good managers and leaders—like you—in order to survive and thrive in the aftermath of a Great Recession and ongoing political turmoil. Executives must be ready at any moment to address and solve any number of problems arising in this new millennium. The environment in which you operate is fraught with complexity and confusion, and errors of judgment have profound and resonant consequences. In short, management now and in the future—at virtually all levels—imposes significant demands for administrative sophistication.

You are inundated with enormous amounts of information and advice, especially from Internet sources, which also can spread your words and decisions worldwide in a matter of seconds. The purpose of *Management Strategies: Timely—and Timeless—Advice for Solving Typical Management Problems*, therefore, is to provide you with experienced-based, relevant professional guidance needed to manage effectively as you navigate a path to prosperity in the 21st century.

This book is the result of our 80-plus years combined experience working with leisure service organizations in the United States and around the world. Throughout this period, we have conducted numerous classes, workshops and seminars, program evaluations, needs assessments, and organizational evaluations, paying particular attention to the thoughts and concerns of managers in the field. The topics addressed in this book reflect much of what they have told us and what we have seen with our own eyes. This book represents a comprehensive encyclopedia of concise yet substantive information and advice on a variety of management issues.

Management Strategies: Timely—and Timeless—Advice for Solving Typical Management Problems presents information that will help you deal with peers, supervisors, subordinates, program participants, the general public, the press, and others with whom you may have contact. Knowing that you need answers fast, we have reduced this book's previous 65 subjects into 41 chapters, arranged in alphabetical order. When an issue needs your attention, simply turn directly to whichever chapter addresses the problem with which you are currently wrestling. There you will find a guiding principle, followed by sage advice, along with Ten Takeaway suggestions that together provide you with specific actions to take and the context within which to take them. (Because information changes so quickly—and now is so accessible online—we have removed the "list of sources" for each chapter. You can Google it!)

If you have time after you read a topic, we further suggest that you do three things. First, recall the last three situations in your own experience where you have observed similar situations. Compare and contrast the past with the present. Second, roughly evaluate yourself as to whether you acted as more of a manager or more of a leader

with respect to the issue in question. You may be surprised to find that sometimes you manage, sometimes you lead, and sometimes you do a little of both. Third, think about how you and your organization might improve performance the next time that problem surfaces.

Management Strategies: Timely—and Timeless—Advice for Solving Typical Management Problems can be used as a point of departure, discussion, and debate comparing and contrasting our experiences with your own on each of the subjects, and also as a guide for management personnel who want to refresh their knowledge of management issues, those who want suggestions to improve their basic management skills, or those who wish to improve their basic management functions. In addition, the book will serve as a valuable resource for students enrolled in a variety of management/leadership courses, especially leisure studies programs (parks, recreation, hospitality, and tourism)—our future managers.

Most importantly, have fun reading this book. Gaining new insights into yourself, your associates, and your organization can be exhilarating, surprising, uplifting, and even embarrassing. At times, most managers take themselves too seriously.

About the Authors

Joseph J. Bannon, Sr., PhD

Publisher, Sagamore-Venture Publishing

Dr. Joseph J. Bannon, Sr. has over 50 years of experience in the parks, recreation, the leisure field, and in publishing. A recognized leader in both fields, Dr. Bannon has received numerous awards for outstanding service. He began his career in 1957 as the director of Parks and Recreation in Leonia, New Jersey and moved on to Topeka, Kansas as the director in 1962. In 1966 he joined the staff at the University of Illinois, and in 1972, Bannon was appointed the head of the Department of Leisure Studies. Dr. Bannon developed the newsletter *Management Strategy* in 1977. The publication was dedicated to disseminating management information to parks and recreation professionals throughout the world. Dr. Bannon has also written many articles and authored and co-authored more than 11 books. Dr. Bannon retired from the University of Illinois in 1991 and now works full time acquiring and developing titles for Sagamore-Venture.

Kim S. Uhlik, PhD

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Kim's career began in 1977, engaging in programming, marketing, and promotions within the hospitality industry. After nearly a decade, he added event management and program planning and delivery to his résumé, involving both public and commercial recreation enterprises. Those initiatives introduced Kim to teaching at the university level, while he earned his PhD in administration at Kent State University. Kim continues to research and publish about partnership development, maintenance and operations management, and teaching/learning styles.



CHAPTER 1

BRAINSTORMING, CREATIVITY, AND INNOVATION

Guiding Principle



Innovation is the engine of progress. If you are not moving forward—innovating—by brainstorming that inspires creative thinking, you are falling behind.

Any organization that is not innovating is preparing to fail. Renaming or repackaging an old product or service only delays its inevitable expiration date. Innovation results from the remarkable human creative process, and may be the most profit-producing resource managers have at their disposal. Brainstorming, and other techniques, awakens that capacity within agency staff.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a creative technique for problem solving that encourages development of radically new ideas, approaches, and techniques. It does not initially require combining good judgment with good ideas. Brainstorming encourages ideas stimulated from the reservoirs of the subconscious mind,

where most creativity and inspiration is believed to originate. These thoughts and ideas can begin a chain reaction, or a “storm” of other ideas in a process of free association.

Although managers can brainstorm alone, engaging a group of friends, coworkers, or others who are involved in or interested in the problem will help. Research shows improvement in both individual and group problem-solving skills when brainstorming is used.

Some Basic Brainstorming Rules

It is important that everyone in the brainstorming group understands that all ideas are welcome (the more the merrier), a few will seem crazy, and some ideas work better when combined with others.

A brainstorming session should include all those affected or involved in the topic at hand. Regardless, the group should be enthusiastic and well informed about the particular issue. Groups composed of five to seven people are very effective. A leader or coordinator will be needed, perhaps a professional facilitator, but certainly someone who is respected and inclusive. Research and experience show that when an authority figure attends a session, his or her presence usually puts a damper on participation. It is difficult for employees to be freewheeling and noncritical if a boss or some other authority figure is observing the process.

The location of a brainstorming session should be different from the usual place of work or home life—a nearby resort, motel, quiet picnic area, or a special room within your home or agency. A fresh location helps create a free-flowing exchange of ideas. However, brainstorming does not require total isolation to be successful. Mini-sessions can be quite useful. Brainstorming should not be a marathon to drain people of ideas.

Leading a Brainstorming Session

Circulate your idea statement prior to the session and write it on a marker board or flip chart immediately before your session begins. You may include a few examples of ideas that might be useful. However, be careful that when introducing “start-up” ideas you do not establish a mind-set. Be prepared to offer more sample ideas in case participants get bogged down.

The seating arrangement, room layout, and decor should add to the “serious informality” of the occasion. Name tags or cards should be provided to participants if they do not already know each other. The group’s leader or coordinator should be visible and reachable. There is no need to maintain any formality in seating, and allowing members to rearrange their seating literally offers them a new perspective, especially after a break. Whatever seating arrangement is decided upon, each member of the brainstorming group should be able to maintain eye contact with other individuals in the session.

Participants should raise their hands for recognition. If several participants have their hands raised, the coordinator should move quickly from one to another in order to maintain a fast tempo. The coordinator should also discourage anyone from reading lists of ideas prepared prior to the session, because that dampens the freewheeling atmosphere.

The coordinator should allow only one idea at a time from each person and should encourage ideas that are sparked by a previous idea. Assign someone to keep track of ideas by note-taking or electronic recording. If a coordinator writes a few of the ideas on a marker board or flip chart as the session goes on, it will stimulate more ideas, or encourage new combinations.

The coordinator's attitude is critical in ensuring that the atmosphere of the session is freewheeling, but not too casual or foolish. This person should be careful not to expect miracles from brainstorming or to inflate its value to the group.

Consider starting your sessions with a brief warm-up, especially if you're working with a group that is not familiar with brainstorming. Some successful exercises that can be used for warm-up purposes include the following ideas:

- How many other uses can you think of for a paper clip?
- If you woke up tomorrow and were twice the size (or half the size) you are today, what difficulties would you encounter?
- You might also try bringing cartoons and asking the group to brainstorm captions for them.

After the session is over, make a list of all the ideas and distribute the list to the participants. Allow the participants to "sleep" on the problem for at least a day. Then, contact participants again to see whether they have developed any additional ideas. Always inform participants about which ideas will be implemented.

What IS Innovation?

As managers are faced with innovating, the amount of creative thinking involved can be expressed as a continuum:

Dreaming → Imagining → Inventing → Innovating → Imitating

Of course, the danger of only dreaming is that nothing ever gets done, and the danger of only imitating is that you are behind before you even begin the race; another agency already has jumped-out of the starting gate, and you are trailing in its dust.

Why Innovate?

Agencies formerly could be segmented into three general types: pure public, non-profit, and pure market. Being distinctly different from one another, competition among them was not too intense; each served its own relatively exclusive clientele. Recent economic developments, however, have compressed the segments into a single market.

This consolidation of segments has produced direct cross-competition leading to imitation: the duplication of services and products among all three organizational types. In an undifferentiated market, all agencies are competing for the identical clients, a zero-sum predatory race.

For example, a recreation agency may operate a wellness center featuring a weight room, as might the local (non-profit) YWCA, as well as a for-profit fitness

center. However, there are only so many residents interested in weight training; one or more of the agencies will not attract enough clients and will fail. Further, the YWCA might—and the fitness center certainly would—complain that the public-supported recreation agency competes at an unfair advantage. Now a political problem exists in addition to a saturated market condition.

Innovation, then, is the key to re-establishing differentiation.

Barriers to Innovation

Barriers to innovation can be erected by individual managers, or be part of an agency's culture. First, many managers fear creativity because they equate it with major changes, which they know can mean uncomfortable adjustments.

Real creativity always brings change, and change can be unnerving and even shattering. The desire to cling to the familiar is human, and the higher a person rises in his or her profession, the greater the desire to secure the gains one has made. Further, the more successful a person or organization becomes, the greater the desire to freeze things into a permanent mold. Thus, managers often insist that they want innovation from employees but then support only the ideas that carry little or no risk.

Second is the stereotype of the “creative personality.” Managers have been overheard saying, “Sure I'd like to have more creative people, if I didn't have to put up with all the inconvenience they cause.” Is the price of having real creativity too high? Is it worth putting up with the constructive discontent that characterizes the creative mind? Innovative managers would be quick to say that no price is too high. Creative people need a feeling of freedom and a sense of control over their own work.

In terms of agency culture, the following barriers may be present:

- **Pressure for Non-Relevant Uniformity.** Managers who insist on uniformity in behavior unrelated to eventual job success run the risk of introducing destructive pressures into the system. Managers should expect their employees to adhere only to rules, regulations, or procedures that directly influence eventual productive performance.
- **Lack of Information Sharing.** People may withhold information from those who need it, in order to satisfy subconscious personal needs for power and control.
- **The Climate for Failure.** Some agencies put a premium on their people always being right, so managers ascend the ladder to success as a reward for not making mistakes. Because people in general are afraid to make mistakes, managers who expect employees always to be right are not likely to enable much creative thinking.
- **Excessive Work Pressure.** Creative effort can neither be legislated nor demanded with production control efficiency. Much creative work emerges from the leisurely and relaxed development of ideas, gathered in time of contemplation, stimulation over friendly lunches, at unscheduled stops over in neighboring offices, or on vacations designed to provide relief from the pressures of daily work.

The Creative Individual

It is a maxim of management that if you want the job done, you must delegate authority along with responsibility. But if you want an outstanding result, you should also delegate the freedom to apply imagination. One thing is certain: the more rules, routines, and rigidity within an organization, the less creative its staff will be. To encourage creativity, managers must believe there is more than one correct way of doing things.

Research suggests that creative people differ significantly from those who are less creative in a number of characteristics. Among the more pronounced attributes of so-called creative people are the following:

- **Sensitivity to Surroundings.** An ability to see things to which the average individual is blind.
- **Mental Flexibility.** An ability to adjust quickly to new developments and change.
- **Independence of Judgment.** Internal strength to insist on evidence, while at the same time recognizing the importance of deeply perceived, but more vaguely defined, feelings.
- **Tolerance for Ambiguity.** A continuing confidence that contradictions, complexities, and apparent disorder may generate richer types of experiences.
- **Ability to Abstract.** Proficiency in breaking down problems into their component parts.
- **Ability to Synthesize.** The skills to combine several elements in a creative way to form a new whole.
- **A Restless Urge.** A special drive, or the motivation to look at problems as challenges to be mastered.

In contrast, creative people are not always geniuses set apart from the rest. All of us have some amount of creative ability. The main difference between those who more fully utilize their capacities and those who neglect them lies in the way people allow their abilities and skills to develop and be nurtured. Ideas can come from anyone, anywhere, anytime, but they are most likely to occur in a receptive, informal atmosphere, to staff who feel appreciated and free to experiment—and yes, occasionally to fail.



10 TAKEAWAYS

BRAINSTORMING, CREATIVITY, AND INNOVATION

- Fully prepare for brainstorming sessions by insuring that the facilitator is qualified, the problem statement has been circulated beforehand, and that the venue has adequate supplies and ambiance.
- Have realistic expectations about the process and potential outcomes.
- Keep participants feeling “safe,” focused, and engaged, and acknowledge their contributions.

- Assign a nonparticipant to record all ideas and idea paths.
- Brainstorm only for as long as participants display true interest and energy.
- Prod employees to take risks. When they are successful, reward them appropriately.
- Keep up enthusiasm during nonproductive periods. No person is continuously creative. Individuals go through times when they “cannot think of a thing.”
- Set occasional deadlines. Although managers cannot and should not try to force a person to be creative at all times, occasional deadlines will spur new ideas. If you tell your staff that you must have an idea by the next day, they will set their minds to arriving at a solution.
- Criticize constructively. When staff offer a creative idea, remind yourself that it looks good to them regardless of its intrinsic merit. If the idea cannot be used, concentrate your comments on the circumstances that make it impractical rather than on the idea itself.
- Listen and ask questions. Many ideas have not yet fully jelled, but when staff begin to explain it to someone else, the idea takes shape. Asking honest questions often serves to clarify a concept.