



Join Us!

We are excited to present our Jammin' Series schedule. These are high-energy, interactive, and engaging sessions designed to stretch your thinking about business and leadership strategy.

Held the first Tuesday of each month, from 7:30-9:00 a.m. in our Creative Think Tank or Strategic Leadership Lab. Seating is limited, so we ask that you register online at proutyproject.com and click "Prouty Events" or email jayna.wallace@proutyproject.com.

A \$20 donation will be accepted at the door benefitting the Prouty Project's STRETCH Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation. Please bring cash or check payable to the Prouty Project.

	January	No Jammin' Session due to the New Year's holiday.
No. 197	February 3	Mike Grant , Activities Director and Head Football Coach, Eden Prairie High School <i>"A Leadership Model for Hiring and Evaluation"</i>
No. 198	March 3	Julie Burrows , Chairman and Co-Founder, UpTurnships, Inc. <i>"UpTurnships - Upturning College Students into the Best New Hires: The Case for Paid Internships"</i>
No. 199	April 7	Ross Bernstein , Ross Bernstein Speaking <i>"The Champions Code"</i>
No. 200	May 5	Robyn Waters , President, RW Trend, LLC and Red Team Ambassador, The Prouty Project <i>"Empathy and Innovation: How Thinking Like a Designer Can Inspire Your Customers' Love and Devotion"</i>
No. 201	June 2	Dow Prouty , Jeff's Dad and 86-Year-Old Author <i>"Grandpa's Book of Rules: Rules and Guidelines for Raising Your Kids, Your Grandkids, and Maybe Your Neighbor's Kids"</i>
	July	No Jammin' Session due to the 4 th of July holiday.
No. 202	August 4	Scott Edinger , Founder, Edinger Consulting Group <i>"The Hidden Leader: Discover and Develop Greatness Within Your Company"</i>
No. 203	September 1	Julie Gilbert Newrai , CEO/Founder, PreciouStatus and CEO/Founder, WOLF Means Business <i>"Business Strategy and Growth, Marketing, and Consumer Mobilizing"</i>
No. 204	October 6	Lewis Rambo , PhD <i>"Rambo Rules: Being ... a Better Boss (BBB)"</i>
No. 205	November 3	Deborah Edwards , Executive Director, Positive Coaching Alliance Minnesota <i>"Changing the Culture of Youth Sports"</i>
No. 206	December 1	Sean Skelley , Executive / Entrepreneur / Intrapreneur <i>"From Dead Poets to Beethoven to Geek Squad - How One Intrapreneur Did It"</i>

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Let us know... call 952.942.2922 or email stretch@proutyproject.com

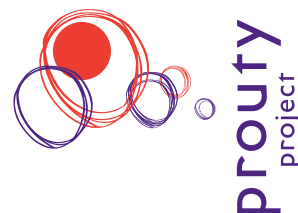
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STRETCH: 2 Hours, 2 Days, 2 Weeks

ISSUE 109
Q1
2015

As we charge into 2015, we have four exciting opportunities to help put some stretch in your strategy. We look forward to seeing you soon:

2 hours: Please join us for our monthly Jammin' sessions. This will be the 19th year of Jammin' sessions in our Creative Think Tank and we're excited that Coach Mike Grant (National High School Football Coach of the Year) will be here in February to help "kick-off" the year. Key contact: jayna.wallace@proutyproject.com.

2 days: Berkshire Hathaway Shareholders Meeting. May 1-3, 2015 Omaha, Nebraska. If three folks from your "C-suite" would like to join us, please let me know. One part education and one part inspiration. I always leave the shareholders meeting ready to tackle the world. Enjoy 190+ years of wisdom with Warren Buffett and Charlie Munger center stage. Key contact: jeff.prouty@proutyproject.com.

2 more days: Silicon Valley Immersion Tour #2. We had the honor of participating in the initial tour, June 2014, hosted by Daniel Wordsworth, CEO of the American Refugee Committee. We're going back, May 13-15, 2015. IDEO, d.school at Stanford University, Google, LinkedIn, SurveyMonkey, and more. Key contact: jeff.prouty@proutyproject.com.

2 weeks: STRETCH Expedition 2015, we're heading to Spain to hike the final 115 miles of

the Camino de Santiago. June 13-26, 2015, with Mike Felmlee and Jayna Wallace "leading the charge" from our firm. On this reflective pilgrimage, our team will range in age from 13-75. A fascinating opportunity to listen, learn, and reflect. Key contact: jayna.wallace@proutyproject.com.

In this issue of our newsletter we focus on innovation and the mindsets that create it. I hope you enjoy.

On this note, I read an article recently quoting Roy Spence (author, "The 10 Essential Hugs of Life"), noting the importance of "hugging your firsts." "When you're a kid, every day is full of firsts, full of new experiences," says Spence.

Here's a toast to a year full of firsts; if those firsts bring you to Eden Prairie, Omaha, Silicon Valley, or Spain, that's doubly fantastic.

Keep stretching, and have a wonderful Q1 2015,



jeff.prouty@proutyproject.com

"C" NOTE QUOTE:

"We need to believe in the impossible and remove the improbable."

Know the quote?

If you know who said this quote, please send an email to: melissa.gennert@proutyproject.com or call 952.942.2922 by **Monday, February 2**; one guess per person. If we have more than one correct answer, we throw those names into a hat and draw the winner of a \$100 gift card.

Last issue's "C" Note Quote winner is...

Anthony Troxel, from DoubleTree by Hilton Memphis Downtown!

Anthony knew that **John Calipari**, Head Coach, University of Kentucky, said the following: **"I'm trying to teach every one of them to lead. Leadership is about everybody else, not yourself."**

Congratulations, Anthony!

Anthony plans to use his gift card for a well-deserved date night with his wife as he has a 1 1/2 year old at home and another one on the way in January.



Anthony Troxel

www.facebook.com/ProutyProject



The Key to Radical Collaboration = Diversity

by **Sam Smith**
sam.smith@proutyproject.com

Recently, I led a micro-innovation session at the 2014 Net Impact Conference in Minneapolis. My mission: to help Nicholas Heimer, owner of Buffalo by Bike, bring fresh thinking to his business, which delivers 100% grass-fed bison to restaurants, grocery stores, and local farmers' markets by way of bicycle.

Nick and I sat amazed as 20 complete strangers filed into our room at the Minneapolis Convention Center. A hops farmer, a communications expert, a financial analyst, a graduate student, and a retired executive were just a few of our seemingly accidental assembly of business minds ready to get to work.

Radical collaboration is a design mindset we emphasize with our clients, which involves fostering teamwork among a group of people with varied backgrounds and viewpoints.

At first glance, one might not expect this motley crew to make any significant headway. Yet what came out of the session were three valuable, insight-driven strategies for Nick to pursue. It was, in fact, collaboration on steroids. And the strength came from these vast differences among the participants.

Radical collaboration is a design mindset we emphasize with our clients, which involves fostering teamwork among a group of people with varied backgrounds and viewpoints. By intentionally assembling diverse experiences and perspectives we can create an environment for breakthrough insights and solutions to emerge.

In this session, the group was given just enough context to start guiding our conversation with their questions. Through purposeful brainstorming, idea sorting, and synthesizing, we had three groups identify the key issue to be addressed and possible solutions. What emerged was an extraordinary diversity of perspectives and shrewd business insights. One group said it was a branding and differentiation issue. Another group felt it was an issue of

efficiency and reaching the most profitable customer. The third group defined the main issue in terms of converting vs. finding customers. And, truthfully, they were all right.

This divergence allowed us to make more progress in our two hours together than we did in the several hours of preparation leading up to the conference. Nick gained more clarity and received more insights on the challenge and the solution from his fusion of radical consultants. The diversity ensured each participant was equally valued, which encouraged a free flow of ideas without judgment. In this way, success was nearly inevitable.

Ultimately, three things became clear by the end of our session:

- 1 The individuals who joined our group were positively impacted by the fact that they had never heard of the business we were supporting and that they were held to tight time constraints.
- 2 The insights that came out of the interactions between group members were due to differences more so than similarities.
- 3 The greatest value of the session would ultimately come from combining aspects of each of the unique solutions which were presented.

Now, how will you create opportunities for radical collaboration within your organization? First, include the people that will best expand the diversity of perspectives in your meetings or innovation sessions. Second, design the experience in such a way that it maximizes collaboration and the synthesis of ideas. And third, make moves across the culture to establish radical collaboration as a best practice in all parts of the business.

Give Stagnation The Boot

It's no secret that in today's rapidly changing marketplace, innovation is one of the most powerful paths to gaining a competitive advantage. What remains a mystery, however, is how to go about it. Without a framework, creativity can get lost in the no-man's-land of boundless sunk costs with limited results. Too many constraints, on the other hand, can squash opportunities to leapfrog the competition and redefine the competitive landscape.

To help make innovation more approachable and actionable, we've created Innovation Boot Camps based on the d.school approach. Steeped in human values, each boot camp centers on the 7 simple mindsets developed by Stanford's d.school:

- 1 **Show Don't Tell:** Communicate your vision in an impactful and meaningful way by creating experiences, using illustrative visuals, and telling good stories.
- 2 **Focus on Human Values:** Empathy for people you are designing for and feedback from these users is fundamental to good design.
- 3 **Craft Clarity:** Produce a coherent vision out of messy problems. Frame it in a way to inspire others and to fuel ideation.
- 4 **Embrace Experimentation:** Prototyping is not simply a way to validate your idea; it is an integral part of your innovation process. We build to think and learn. Enjoy Andrea's article that takes a deeper dive into this concept.
- 5 **Be Mindful of Process:** Know where you are in the design process, what methods to use in that stage, and what your goals are.
- 6 **Bias Toward Action:** Design thinking is a misnomer; it is more about doing than thinking. Bias towards doing and making over thinking and meeting.
- 7 **Radical Collaboration:** Bring together innovators with varied backgrounds and viewpoints. Enable breakthrough insights and solutions to emerge from the diversity. Enjoy Sam's article that takes a deeper dive into this concept.

We've found some of the best thinking on innovation emerge from the d.school at Stanford University. Founded by Stanford mechanical engineering professor David Kelley in 2004 as part of a joint project with Hasso Plattner Institute of University of Potsdam in Germany, the program has become one of the most sought after in the world.

For more information about how to give your company's stagnation the boot, contact:

Sam Smith
at
sam.smith@proutyproject.com
or call
952.942.2922



Lessons on Innovation from Inside a Blanket Fort

by **Andrea West**
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On a snowy afternoon last year, I found myself in a basement family room surrounded by blankets, pillows, and three high-energy kids. All of the ingredients were there. A blanket fort was imminent.

The three miniature architects quickly got to work, gathering furniture to bolster the walls, setting up an electric lantern to light the space, and even planning out separate wings to ensure their fleecy palace was big enough to prevent territory conflicts.

When a wall fell down, they tried new approaches, sometimes to the detriment of what had already been built. When they ran out of wall supports, they employed a plastic, toy construction set to sculpt a door frame. They didn't stop to talk it through, organize, or critique. They just created and recreated. And they saw possibilities that had never occurred to me.

As I sat in their cozy cave, it dawned on me. Somewhere along the way, my knack for this unbridled experimentation had been muted. I had forgotten how to play.

In business, we tend to see work and play as two opposing forces. Facing fears of failure, humiliation, or wasted resources, we've put so many rules in place to protect our work, that when we do make space to play, it's limited. The focus isn't on trying new things just to see what emerges. Instead, we focus on perfecting our ideas to insulate ourselves from criticism. We gather data to prove that we're on the right path. And we try to squeeze more progress, more work, and more profit out of less time.

My little playmates, on the other hand, had no end game, no fear of failure, no time frame. There was only experimentation, adaptation, and creation. It was innovation in its purest form.

While we may not be able to implement a play approach in all of business, we can take a few lessons from the play ethic of our future leaders.

Cultivate a Don't-Know Mindset:

One of our greatest inhibitors can be setting expectations for a particular outcome. Playtime is all about trying something, seeing if it works, adjusting, and trying again. Dive into that process of experimentation. If you can approach your work with a don't-know mindset, it creates a space for delightfully unexpected results.

Embrace That Nasty Four-Letter Word:

Fail. Fail early and often. Seek failure the same way you seek success, for they are equally effective teachers. Case in point: Thomas Edison. He literally tried thousands of filaments for the light bulb before finding the one that worked. A failure is often just another step closer to a game-changing discovery.

Develop Your Play Ethic:

With all the work that needs to be done, who has time for play? Perhaps it's time to reframe that question. We can no longer afford to eliminate play from our work. According to the National Institute for Play, more than 75% of the American workforce does work which requires employees to collaborate to solve complex issues. Playful ways of work foster more creativity and adaptability in teams. To help with our increasingly complex work, we need to learn how to do the work in a play state.

Perhaps it's time to book a play date. Start by asking yourself, when was the last time you really played at work? Where will you experiment this year? And why haven't you already started?

Somewhere along the way, my knack for this unbridled experimentation had been muted.