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the
**PROUTY
PROJECT**

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Read'n Route To: _____

Return To: _____

"C" NOTE QUOTE:

"To me, business isn't about wearing suits or pleasing stockholders. It's about being true to yourself, your ideas, and focusing on the essentials."

● If you know who said this quote, please send an e-mail to melissa.gennert@proutyproject.com or call 952.942.2922 by **Friday, October 28** – one guess per individual. If we have more than one correct answer, we throw those names into a hat and draw the winner of a \$200 gift card.

Yes, that's right, \$200 this issue because we stumped you all in our last issue! There was no winner! Therefore, we are giving last issue's gift of \$100 to this issue's winner!

For those curious to know... **Chantal Tremblay, Director of Creation for OVO (produced by Cirque de Soleil)**, said the following:

"The creative process is always complex. In the beginning, the threads are tangled and form no discernable pattern. Little by little, textures and materials come together, a framework takes shape in the skillful hands of inspired artists."

Thanks to all of you that entered your guesses! Better luck next quarter!

Celebration and Anticipation

Celebrate: A spectacular and mind-boggling STRETCH 2011. Enjoy Mary Schoessler's after-action thoughts on page 4.

Celebrate: Mike Dickey's "big win" in the Prouty-sponsored #21 car at Raceway Park (Shakopee, MN), August 21, 2011. If you haven't seen a "figure 8 race" yet, you're in for a heart-pounding, mind-stretching experience.

Anticipate: We're excited to announce STRETCH 2012, an environmental service project, in the Galapagos Islands, April 15-26, 2012. Grayce Belvedere Young will be leading the way. See more on page 4.

Anticipate: We have 3 "spots" left to climb Mount Elbert, Colorado's tallest peak, a 14-er, with Erik Weiheymayer on Saturday, June 9, 2012. Interested? Please call soon.

Anticipate: We're looking for a "volunteer." A management team or board that wants to do its strategic planning "during the graveyard shift," 10 p.m.–6 a.m. This is an "experiment," so we'll do the work at "sonny bono" (not pro bono), very very very reduced rates. Interested? Please call soon.

Anticipate: We've been doing some exciting work with Intercom Agency, refreshing our look and feel. Stay tuned in early 2012 for the "unveiling."

Have a spectacular 4th quarter.

Please come visit the **creative think tank** and **strategic leadership lab** soon.

Keep puttin' the stretch in strategy.



jeff.prouty@proutyproject.com



● BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Governance: Board Engagement (Part 4 of a 4-Part Series)



mike.felmler@proutyproject.com

Interview by
Mike Felmler

Twelve months ago we introduced a four-part series entitled Governance: Board Engagement.

We challenged board chairs and directors to answer three fundamental questions:

- 1) Are you spending your precious board time on the right things?
- 2) Are you performing these things well?
- 3) Are you meeting the needs of the organization and performing up to the best of your abilities?

Over the past twelve months, we've shared a board engagement tool to help you evaluate whether your board is appropriately engaged in the right things, highlighted the six elements of a robust board assessment process, and provided examples of how individual board member assessment tools should be used to develop high-performing board members.

Today, we want to introduce you to **Barb Baasch** and **Paul Mackin**. Barb chairs the board of directors of Think Mutual Bank, headquartered in Rochester, Minnesota, and Paul is its CEO. We've had the pleasure of working with Barb and Paul and their colleagues over the past 18 months to move their board from **good to great**.

I caught up with them recently to get a sense for their progress.

Mike: Why did you pursue this process?

Barb: This was not a difficult decision for me and the executive committee. I was newly named as chair when we embarked on this journey. I simply wanted to ensure we were doing the right things to help this organization thrive. And, the best place to start was to ensure we were doing everything in our power as a board to help Paul and his colleagues do this.

Paul: I was also a relatively new CEO at the time. I wanted even more support from the board and knew we could do this if we tapped more deeply into our directors' skills and talents.

I was always struck by Susan Boren's definition of a board of directors. Susan is a consultant with Spencer Stuart's Minneapolis office, and defines it as:

"A group of individuals who don't know each other well, who come together periodically, to make big decisions about an organization they know very little about."



Mike: With that as a backdrop, how do you know you're making progress?

Barb: First of all, we know a lot more about each other today than when we started. We've been very intentional in creating time in our agendas to get to know each other and members of the management team as a means to build trust within and among our teams. We're very clear about what our role is and, as importantly, what it isn't. Thus, we continually question whether what

we're doing is relevant and how the decisions we're making are benefiting our mutual shareholders.

Paul: Our directors are more confident today. I can see it in their eyes. They're asking better questions and they're challenging us more as senior leaders causing us to think in new and different ways.

Mike: What was the most difficult or challenging part of your journey so far?

Barb: I'll highlight two challenges. First, we needed to be brutally clear about each of our roles and our expectations. Defining roles was easy. Defining expectations was much harder because we increased the expectations to serve on our board. Secondly, we needed to learn how best to give and receive feedback. We're peers. We don't work with each other. And, so we had to create a safe environment where our directors felt comfortable participating because we give feedback to each other face-to-face with the entire board present. It's the ultimate form of accountability.

Paul: I think we as leaders had a perception that questions from board members were somehow a reflection of us not doing our jobs well. We all take pride in how we lead this organization and I think we've been overly critical of questions we received from the board in the past. We think differently today and believe it's really our obligation to help them better understand the business and environment in which we operate.

Mike: Any other words of wisdom for a board chair or CEO interested in creating a high-performing board of directors?

Barb: Becoming a high-performing board doesn't just happen because you wish it to be true. It takes a lot of work and it takes time. Building a trusting relationship with your CEO is absolutely critical to your success. And, you need to continually manage expectations between the board and management. It's a dynamic relationship and one you have to intentionally nurture and grow.

Paul: I really love being a CEO and appreciate the progress we're making. It's all about the integrity of your efforts. You simply can't make this happen alone.

Thanks Barb and Paul for sharing your pursuit of excellence!

● ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Cultural Competence: How Consciously Competent is your Global Team?

peter.bailey@proutyproject.com

Article by
Peter Bailey



The most effective global business people today fall into two camps: *unconscious competents* and *conscious competents*. Which do you have on your team?

Unconscious competents have learned through their life experience how to adapt to ambiguous circumstances, read the invisible communication, and know instinctively how to ask for or deliver information in a way that is non-threatening. In fact, their seemingly magical style seems to elicit critical information that others could not uncover. They appear to be uniquely suited for global business management. Their drawback? They often don't know what they are doing that is working, or how to pass it on to others.

For example, a senior manager who was born in Mumbai, India, but works for a financial firm in Singapore may be adept at navigating the cultural mix of people, but he can't develop the new American manager who has just joined the office. He lacks the cultural distance or the global perspective to know what he is doing that is helping him to build multi-cultural relationships and negotiate complex contracts. Worse, having proven his worth in the Singapore office, he might be promoted and transferred to the home office in the USA or UK. Where to everyone's surprise, including his, his performance is sub-par, and he gets frustrated and leaves the company. The manager's *unconscious competence* often proves to be a curse; if not managed well, it can impact colleagues, customers, and multiple relationships throughout the business network.

Conscious competents are just as effective at maneuvering through the fog of cultural nuances, and as astute in the middle of cultural conflict as the previous manager, but she has a saving grace. Through her life experience and education, she knows what she is doing. She is keenly aware of how to modify her behaviors so that other people are more comfortable and when to reflect on the cultural toolkits which can make all the difference. And, for the growth of her overseas office and the company's growth goals, she can pass on to others the clues to her success to enhance their performance across cultures.

Which do you have on your team?

If you have *unconscious competents*, you need to find a way to increase their self-awareness so that they can be more cognizant of what they are doing that has made them so successful. Instinct is a born gift but intuition can be developed. Your *unconscious competent*



managers needs to turn their instinctive gifts into teachable approaches, attitudes, and behaviors so that other managers and co-workers can adopt similar styles and more finely tune the blades of their perception and cultural intuition.

If you have a *conscious competent* manager, your work is to replicate them. Ask them to codify not only what they are doing and how they think, but even how they begin to think before they plan any cross-cultural interactions. To be *consciously competent* means to apply critical cross-cultural tools at all times, "knowing how and when to use what, with whom," and also how to repair situations when things go wrong.

Top Ten Global "Do's:"

- 1) Remember to always pause and ask yourself, "How might my behavior, words, or actions be perceived?"
- 2) Check cross-cultural dimensions charts for gaps and alignment.
- 3) "Preparation is better than reparation."
- 4) Check emails with others before sending or responding.
- 5) Hold people in unconditional positive regard.
- 6) Assume that other peoples' actions were done with positive intent.
- 7) Ask: What information from all the cultural dimensions might help me understand the real message being communicated to me?
- 8) Ask: How might I get more information, perhaps indirectly, to give me a more clear picture of what is really going on?
- 9) Ask: How might I communicate my message in a different way to get the results I intended?
- 10) Practice the **G.L.O.B.A.L.** steps:
 - **G**reet with a generous spirit.
 - **L**isten to understand all points of view.
 - **O**pen oneself to possibility.
 - **B**uild a solution from multiple perspectives and values.
 - **A**cceptance is the key.
 - **L**everage actions for mutual benefit.

● STRETCH EXPEDITION 2011

World T.E.A.M. (The Exceptional Athlete Matters) Sports Adventure Team Challenge, near Rancho Del Rio, Colorado. Erik Weihenmayer hosted us in this race, designed to interconnect ability, disability, and possibility.

Excerpts from
Mary Schoessler



My daughter, Alyssa, and I are at a loss at sharing the significant impact the Stretch Expedition had upon us, our teammates, and others at large. Our story is just one perspective among countless others; if only we could bring all of them to you.

We survived and all teams finished with no medical emergencies. My first, “I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore Toto,” moment came on training day. I was spotting my team member, who is paraplegic, on a rugged incline. If his bike tipped, my job was to push him and his bike back up against the mountain so we didn’t go down.

The trek was more dangerous than I expected, particularly given the diverse levels of ability and disability throughout the teams; “adventure” earned its rightful place. The Colorado River was running at a record 100-year flood stage (10,000+ cubic feet per second) so rapids were raging, giving us several thrilling “TV tourist commercial” rafting moments and forcing team organizers to change the course design.

On day one, each team chose two members to do a canyon hike, traversing a narrow and winding, sometimes disappearing path used by miners in the 1800s, high above the river. As I led my teammate Bill, who is blind and deaf, I noted the synchronicity between our partnership and my recent detached retina and upcoming cataract surgeries (which I conveniently neglected to share with him). It was an amazingly rewarding experience for both of us, requiring full engagement of mental, physical, and sensory focus.

Alyssa and I were in better physical shape than I thought, particularly since we’d only been training for four months. Having said that, my team’s goal was to complete versus compete, decreasing some of my high-performance pressures.

Fortunate to be part of a high-level, functioning, and collaborative team, we shared attributes of mental, physical, and empathy strengths, albeit in different compartments. Mind, body, spirit—it didn’t take long to figure out attitude and endurance can overcome any ability or disability.

It is hard to describe what it’s like to see the look on a person who is quadriplegic and has never white water rafted or zip lined come screaming onto shore, to watch an able-bodied person with acrophobia or aquaphobia push above and through their white-knuckled fears, or observe a blind person put his trust and footsteps completely in someone else’s pathway. How do you explain the feeling of watching a wheelchair user get pulled and pushed through unforgiving terrain for hours and then watch him go screaming by you down the mountain when a path appears, completely in his element, pedaling like hell with his hands, while you cautiously ride your brakes hard for fear of falling?

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Bigger Goals ● Bolder Strategies ● Better Collaboration

When “yes I can, yes we will” cuts across all abilities and erases self-doubt and challenging limitations, the possibilities are amazing. If we hit the wall, we never failed to climb over it. Or, extend a hand of ability to create a new possibility for one another. It was such a fresh and addictive experience given the polarization and me-first atmosphere often surrounding us today.

Alyssa told the leaders she’d do it again next year, mom’s on the fence, thinking more “bucket list” than an annual affair. Life’s short, more to explore. But never say never, especially since we’re being chided to put together an all-female team for next year. Any takers?

Our thanks to the Prouty Project for their commitment to push others to STRETCH and believe in the possibilities and abilities of ALL. And, for reminding us the Hero’s Journey escapes no one.

Mary Schoessler and Alyssa (Aly) Haefner-July 2011

Stretch Expedition 2012: Going Green in the Galapagos

Environmental Service Trip to the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador

Working alongside local Ecuadorians, the service experience focuses on environmental conservation and sustainable farming.

Tentative Itinerary for April 2012

Travel to Ecuador:	4/15 or 4/16
Orientation meeting in Quito:	4/17
Service experience in Galapagos Islands:	4/18 – 4/25
Return to States:	4/25 or 4/26

Cost

Approximately \$2,000, plus airfare from the States to Quito (about \$1,400). Space is limited.

Join Us for the Kick-Off Meeting

Wednesday, October 26, 6:00–8:00 p.m. at the Prouty Project offices.

Please e-mail Melissa at

melissa.gennert@proutyproject.com to attend.

Deadline for Stretch 2012 Registration

December 15, 2011



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Call 952.942.2922 or email stretch@proutyproject.com

THANKS!