

# **STYBEL PEABODY & ASSOCIATES, INC.**

Try This Free Technique: Your Board/Team Can Exercise Peripheral Vision Within 60 Minutes.

This is a great exercise we use with our client Boards and senior level teams. Gather your team for lunch and have them watch this 14 minute story: a 16 year solved a sixty year old problem that had eluded scientists: an inexpensive test for pancreatic cancer that provided valid early detection:

[http://www.ted.com/talks/jack\\_andraka\\_a\\_promising\\_test\\_for\\_pancreatic\\_cancer\\_from\\_a\\_teenager.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/jack_andraka_a_promising_test_for_pancreatic_cancer_from_a_teenager.html)

After they watch the video, ask for comment:

1. The event that stimulated the “ah ha” moment was reading about carbon nanotubes AND listening to a lecture about antibodies at the same time. How do YOU get your “ah ha” moments? Are we using our time together to generate enough “ah ha” moments?
2. This 16 year old solved a 60 year old problem that had eluded experts. What are the pros and cons of experience in our Board/Team?
3. We think we value voices different than ours. These scientists and professors did not. Are we that different from them?
4. The speaker sent 100 letters to experts asking for help. He got 99 rejections. If a novice in our field sent a suggestion would, would we also reject it? (Ask for a show of hands for “Yes” versus “No.” Discuss the vote and what it means).
5. (Take the same vote again, this time using the Delphi Technique where people vote without revealing their identities. ([www.polleverywhere.com](http://www.polleverywhere.com))). Have a group discussion about the differences in voting results when confidentiality was guaranteed versus when voting was public. What does it say about the culture of the Team/Board?

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This exercise costs nothing to set up and can be done over lunch.

### DISCUSSION:

This COULD be positioned as an exercise in helping a Board/Team think creative ways or be open to novel ways of doing things.

But you might get the following push back: “It is not our job to be creative. Our industry is not creative. It is about process, leveragability, growth, and net income.”

Another way of dealing with the same issues without the push back is to focus on helping the Board/Team keep its “eyes on the ball AND 45 degrees from the ball” at the same time.

“Keep Your Eyes on the Ball” is a cliché’ your colleagues heard from parents, coaches, driving instructors, and mentors. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, however, the new cliché should be “keep your eyes on the ball and 45 degrees from the ball.” In other words, Boards/Teams need not necessarily be creative. But they should be exercising peripheral vision.

And many Boards/Teams fail to do this.

We know that peripheral vision degrades as speed increases (Strasburger et al, 2011). And the speed of business seems to increase every year. The implication is that the systematic use of peripheral vision becomes less natural. Employing peripheral vision requires structure and appropriate culture. It is important to engage in this effort because the greatest threats and opportunities are likely to be at the peripheral.

Two examples:

Blackberry produces a business tool that once had the dominant share in the corporate mobile market. When Apple announced I phone, Blackberry leaders dismissed it as a minor irritant. Apple, of course, produced electronic gadgets associated with young consumers.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study indicated that “head-on” collisions represent only 2% of all traffic accidents. (2005). But side-collisions represent 25% of accidents in the United States (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2011) and 25% of accidents in Australia (Fildes et al, 1995).

This exercise helps initiate a discussion about developing Board/Team procedures and culture that explicitly keeps participants eyes “on the ball and 45 degrees from the ball.”

Introducing the concept “eyes on the ball and 45 degrees from the ball” itself might begin to change culture if that phrase is used over and over again.

Maryanne & Larry

Leadership Success:

Retained Search, Leader Development, Career Management.

Tel. 617 594 7627

[lstybel@stybelpeabody.com](mailto:lstybel@stybelpeabody.com)

[www.stybelpeabody.com](http://www.stybelpeabody.com)

[www.boardoptions.com](http://www.boardoptions.com)

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## REFERENCES

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