

LINDA HILL

CO-CREATING THE FUTURE

“True innovation comes out of a collective process.”

Over the last ten years, I have dedicated my time to studying exceptional leaders, whose organizations have the capacity to innovate constantly. There is a great deal of research on innovation and leadership, but there is very little that explains the connection between the two. For that reason, working with innovative companies, I concentrated on observing their executives, looking for similarities and differences in their leadership styles. Like that, I discovered that almost all of them had similar goals, but the way that they did things was unique because it reflected their personal characteristics.”

“When we see constant innovation in a company, we realize that they are rarely the work of a solitary genius that had a brilliant idea. That is far from the truth, because it is a collective process. At Pixar, the company founded by Ed Catmull and which I studied for several years, it is very clear how many people are needed to reach an amazing result. More than 200 people work over four or five years to make each of their movies, and the story tends to evolve with time. It is never defined from the beginning.”

“Innovating requires many different

perspectives, and the ability to discover a path. You can’t plan for innovation. In fact, many times it is the combination of old ideas to solve a problem a different way. For that reason, collaboration is important. An isolated genius doesn’t tend to reach objectives. And it is there that the leader plays a facilitative role.”

“I noticed three common characteristics of leaders with my colleagues. The first is ‘creative abrasion’: the ability to defend a point of view in the face of conflict. The second is ‘creative agility,’ related to the ability to go through the trial and error process until the problem at hand is solved. Finally, ‘creative determination,’ related to the process of decision-making, which must be very clear, inclusive and patient. Like that, one vision will never dominate, and people will work to maintain a constant debate without discarding ideas, combining them to make them work.”

“More than acting, the task of great leaders is to build the stage. Because they understand that people don’t want to follow them into the future, but participate in the creation of the future.”

© WOBI

