



Ten Minutes of Your Time. Lasting Business Impact.

**Issue 6
26 February 2004**

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent; it is the one that is most adaptable to change."

- Charles Darwin, scientist (1809-1882)

What's On My Mind This Week

Can You Withstand the Heat?

The Concorde is one hot aircraft! As it flies at twice the speed of sound, the temperature on the exterior of the plane can reach 261 degrees Fahrenheit even though the outside air is -69 degrees. Under this increased heat, the plane expands by seven inches in length, so to keep pace with the constant expansion and contraction, the cabin floor of the airplane is supported by rollers.

How's *that* for adapting to change?

On the other hand, the Concorde is very inflexible. It uses fuel at an alarming rate, but has a capacity of only 100 passengers (a Boeing 747 can carry over 500). Its wing and fuselage design, while providing stability for supersonic flight, makes it a very noisy airplane and the limited number produced makes it an expensive machine as well.

So while the Concorde is adaptable to a wide range of temperatures, its vulnerability to slower economic growth and increasing maintenance costs put it out of service in 2003.

Which raises the question: where is *your* organization adaptable, and where is it inflexible? If two employees left tomorrow, are you in jeopardy or can others pick up their work? If your selling price dropped 10 percent or your key supplier raised prices, would you remain profitable? Can you deliver a custom product for a new client in less than your normal delivery schedule, or would that business go to a competitor?

Like the Concorde, some flexibility and rigidity is built into any organization from the start. But your company is not a physical object, and therefore is not limited by its initial design. It can become ever-more adaptable over time if you make the effort to build speed, capacity, lower costs, and shared knowledge into your operations.

As PCA's founder, Philip Crosby, said, "Management's job is to produce an organization that can run anything. Today's product, today's service will most certainly change and be replaced by something else...So the real product is the

organization." Start by making a list of your organization's flexible and inflexible areas. Then prioritize the list of your weaknesses and turn them into your strengths over time. While you can no longer fly from London to New York in three and a half hours, it's not too late to apply the lessons of the world's only supersonic commercial airplane and make your company soar.

Creating Customer Success

With Annie Christopher, Founder, Annie's Naturals



**ANNIE'S
NATURALS.**

Annie Christopher,
Founder,
Annie's Naturals

Sometimes it seems all the good business ideas have been executed, yet organizations must constantly identify and implement new ideas to keep their company growing and fresh in the marketplace.

This week, *Take Ten Minutes* talked to an executive who faces a very daunting challenge: Annie Christopher, founder of salad dressing and condiments company Annie's Naturals. In an industry full of French, Russian and Italian dressings, Annie competes by finding and producing unique flavor combinations. With a product line including Goddess, Sea Veggie and Shiitake & Sesame, Annie's unique dressings held 13 slots on the top 20 list of best-selling natural foods salad dressings last year, and captured 39 cents of every dollar spent on natural salad dressings in the US. Here's what Ms. Christopher had to say about finding and executing that next big idea:

Q: How do you come up with new flavors?

A: I read, travel, and eat at a *lot* of restaurants. It's hard to go to Venice and *not* feel inspired! I have a degree in the culinary arts, but I'm also a painter, sculptor, and a potter, so whenever I travel I always go to at least one art museum and one restaurant.

Q: So your activities outside of work are important to the success of the company?

A: I trained in classical French methods, but yes, my artistic outlets are just as important as that background. Art is a form of meditation for me; it gives me the opportunity to relax my mind so different and new ideas have a chance to percolate and surface. I wouldn't have these ideas if I was just endlessly working in the test kitchen.

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The Capability Group and Philip Crosby Associates
306 Dartmouth Street, Boston MA 02116
617/716-0222

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Q: What is the least effective way to come up with a new idea?

A: (Laughs) To have someone tell you what to do! Seriously, having someone dictate what should be done is the best way to kill creativity. For instance, our sales force was really pressuring me to develop a poppy seed dressing, because their statistics showed that poppy seed dressings were hot, but to maintain our approach to product development I had to resist the pressure to make just another traditional poppy seed dressing. By giving the idea the space it needed, we came up with a contemporary twist - Organic Papaya Poppy Seed. It has an entirely different flavor profile and the color is absolutely beautiful.

Q: How do you know your tastes will be accepted by the marketplace?

A: We do informal testing around the office and there are a few people out there whose taste buds we trust, so we'll send test batches to them and modify based on feedback. We do not do extensive market testing.

Q: As a result, does launching one of your unique flavors feel like a huge risk?

A: Some have felt like huge risks, but they are risks you have to take if you are going to be first. When we launched the industry's first Raspberry dressing, for instance, it felt like a huge risk but it turned out to be a big success.

Some of our competitors take the risk out by simply copying us after we've been successful - that's why you see so many Raspberry dressings on the market today. Taking risks means you will at some point fail. Our Black Olive and Truffles dressing isn't doing too well - it has a terrific flavor profile but is probably too esoteric or gourmet for most people. Our "Wild Organics" line, built on ingredients with health benefits, was a little before its time.

Q: How do you deal with failure? How do you make certain you won't fail again?

A: You can't be certain and be creative at the same time. I accept the fact that we'll fail a certain percent of the time. If you're going to be creative, I think you have to be comfortable with some failure.

Q: How long does it take to create a new flavor?

A: You can't really predict it. Sometimes a dressing that seems simple - like Red Wine Vinaigrette - will take six months because we have a very clear idea on what color or consistency we want to achieve. Sometimes you have to put aside an idea and come back to it. You need to give yourself space between formulations; you can't get what you want by forcing it.

Q: How do you go from inspiration to product? What's the process?

A: Once we have an idea, we find the best sources for the ingredients we need. Then we put together a concept flavor profile and start playing with it in the test kitchen. When we're satisfied, we send it out to our tasters to get feedback and tweak the

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recipe based on their response. Once we're ready to produce it in large volumes, we often have to tweak the formula again - when you scale up, sometimes you need to subtract some vinegar or add some salt to achieve the same results.

Q: Not every company is built on a foundation of creativity. What advice would you give other business people to generate new business ideas?

A: Whatever your focus is, resist becoming so singular in it that you lose your creative outlets. Even when you feel like you don't have the time, do things that invigorate your brain - exercise or paint or go out with friends. You'll attack business problems in much more creative ways as a result.

About Take Ten Minutes

Take Ten Minutes is a weekly publication of [Philip Crosby Associates](#) and [The Capability Group](#).

The premise behind *Take Ten Minutes* is simple: take ten minutes out of every week to refocus and recommit to business improvement. *Take Ten Minutes* features quotes and interviews to inspire you. We also pull articles from today's headlines as examples of the power of the preventive culture (or the deep problems caused by not having one).

As the name suggests, *Take Ten Minutes* is relentless with the editing razor and keeps each issue tight - each issue should take you no more than ten minutes to read, start to finish. You'll reap even bigger rewards if you kick in an extra ten minutes to discuss the ideas with a colleague or to take an idea found here and plan to roll it out in your organization. We hope *Take Ten Minutes* becomes the business improvement equivalent of your running partner, providing the inspiration you need to lace up and "just do it" on those weeks when the couch seems oh-so preferable.

We hope you enjoy *Take Ten Minutes*. As Philip Crosby said, improving your business "is a journey that never ends." So let the journey...*continue!*

Please send story ideas or comments to our [editor](#).

About Our Companies

In today's marketplace, only capable companies will survive and thrive. The overarching goal of [Philip Crosby Associates](#) (PCA) and [The Capability Group](#) (TCG) is to give companies the culture, tools, methodology and results-focused support to become 'Capable Organizations' - useful, reliable, adaptable, and ever-focused on achieving customer success.

PCA and TCG deliver on this goal by first working with clients to assess where they are on the maturity spectrum and where they want to go. For companies early in the process, we work hand-in-hand with management to install a culture of prevention - the culture that has been championed by the PCA side of our business since quality management guru and PCA founder Philip Crosby published *Quality is Free* in 1979. Over the past two decades, Crosby's techniques have been implemented by many of the Fortune 500, as well as small and mid-sized companies seeking excellence.

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