Book Review

Frances Horibe. *Creating the Innovation Culture: Leveraging Visionaries, Dissenters and Other Useful Troublemakers in Your Organization*. Toronto/New York/Chichester/Weinheim/Brisbane/Singapore: John Wiley and Sons, 2001

Reviewed by Eleanor D. Glor

Frances Horibe has written a helpful book for managers of innovators. Horibe is a former public service manager who is currently a management consultant. She has been a quality examiner. Horibe has previously published Managing Knowledge Workers: *New Skills and Attitudes to Unlock the Intellectual Capital in Your Organization*. Her wide management experience shows.

Horibe's perspective is that innovators are often dissenters, in an organizational context, and that our natural social proclivities are to exclude dissenters. Beginning from the position that dissenters may cause inefficiency, but they also cause innovation, Horibe's premise is that organizations that wish to innovate must learn to accept and to listen to dissenters and visionaries. She dissects dissent, arguing both that there are progressively worse stages for suppressing dissent, and that dissent itself occurs in a continuum. From this point, she goes on to examine ways to suppress dissent, without even trying, and who dissenters are.

Horibe then explores in depth the role of the manager of dissenters. She presents the analogy of the manager as a political handler. By focussing on strategies for dealing with dissenters and dissent, she provides a comprehensive picture for coaching dissenters, identifying underground dissent, surfacing dissent in, above, around and above the manager.

Horibe then identifies techniques for kick-starting an innovation culture, the structures and mechanisms for dissent, and how to encourage dissent. She concludes by asserting that sometimes enough is enough, and outlines strategies and tactics for firing destructive dissenters.

This is a good book. It is well, clearly, and informally written. Horibe uses dialogue very effectively–dare I predict a training video on the horizon? She makes a convincing case for more openness and acceptance of different ideas and ways of behaving in the workplace. While this might be a bit uncomfortable, greater tolerance of people and ideas could be to the good in many ways.

Much of the advice offered can be described as good management as much as good management of innovators. From speaking last, to listening effectively and repeating back what is heard, to following through, to firing humanely, this is all excellent management advice. This is important. I too have argued, in *Policy Innovation in the Saskatchewan Public Sector* (Glor, 1997), that effective implementation of innovation, and creating an innovation culture, requires excellent management. This is not all there is to creating the innovation culture, however.

As a consequence, the book has some weaknesses, too. First, while well grounded in experience, the book is not as well grounded in the knowledge that is already in the domain as I would have liked. It is based to much on examples (not even thoughtful, comprehensive case studies). In

addition, many of the standard examples as drawn upon–3M, Xerox, Hewlett Packard. With her background in management consulting, the author should have been able to draw on more examples with which she had a substantial amount of personal experience.

Second, values are not well examined. While the author encourages disagreement, she dwells at length, in several dialogues, on how participants on a committee to plan privatization of a company/government department should not have been influenced by a member who revealed to the participants the consequences of what they were doing. They wanted to react to assuage these effects. Horibe was critical of their doing so. An alternate approach to this example could have credited their hesitation, and examined the implications of the values being expressed–people would lose jobs. A more innovative approach would have shown the committee members trying to find ways to reduce the harm being done, by saving people's jobs.

Third, the resistance managers are facing in this book is part of an organizational culture. She does not say enough about organizational culture and how to influence it.

Lastly, the book is pretty much exclusively directed to managers. While I do not wish to downplay the need to help managers become more open to innovations and innovators, she might have addressed more the ways in which the rest of the people in the workplace also need to change and what dissenters can do to move their innovations ahead. Innovation requires a willingness to listen, to support innovation, not just on the part of managers but also on the part of others too in the workplace. Horibe pretty well treats innovators as outsiders and as powerless people, describing them as *wild ducks*. As with everything else, innovators come in many forms, with many sets of capacities. They too need to build their skills, including their capacity to recognize when they have a really good idea, how to stick to it positively, and how to move it through their organization effectively.

These last three points are issues I am personally addressing. It is therefore easy for me to see that she did not dwell on them in any depth. So, let me hasten to reiterate that this is an excellent book for managers who wish to encourage innovation in their units and organizations, and provides some skill-building material, which most books on this subject do not.