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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

# Why the World Needs More People to Create Things...

The year is 1974 and Arthur Fry was participating, as he usually did on Sundays, singing in the local church choir. On this specific Sunday, Fry was dealing with an annoying problem – he kept on losing the song page markers in his hymn book while singing.

In order to find hymns quickly, Fry would stick little pieces of paper between the pages like bookmarks. However, these page markers would often slide deep into the pages of the hymn book or even worse, fall out of the hymn book altogether! Frustrated with the constant placing and replacing of loose bookmarks, Fry started thinking about a solution for his problem.

*“It was during the sermon that I thought what I really need is a little bookmark that will stick to the paper, but will not tear the paper when I remove it.” – Arthur Fry*

With this problem at the back of his mind, Arthur went back to work the following week and started working on a solution for his problem. As luck would have it, Fry was working at the ideal company to assist in solving the problem. He was an employee at 3M and one of his co-workers and good friend, Spencer Silver, was an adhesive specialist.

Over the ensuing months, Fry and Silver developed a piece of paper that would stick to a page, but could easily be removed and reapplied over and over. When they initially introduced the product to their marketing department, the product was considered a flop and rejected by 3M management.

However, Fry and Silver persisted in their endeavors and after five years of constant rejection the product was finally successfully introduced into the market.

Eventually, this personal little project of Fry and his persistence with it led to one of the best-selling office supplies of all-time in

the form of the Post-It Note. Today, Post-It notes (now in a large variety) generate more than \$ 1 billion annually for 3M in terms of sales. One will find them in libraries, schools, offices and in all work environments imaginable.

What can we learn from the story of Arthur Fry? More importantly, how can we use this example to make our lives and the world around us a better place?

## **Start by Creating Something Small**

It is important to remember that it was never Arthur Fry's intention to create a best-selling office supply product. He simply wanted to make a better bookmark for his choir hymnal.

If you are anything like me then you would also have been guilty of thinking that if you are not working on something glamorous or important, then it would not be of much value to anyone. However, the reality is that the most important thing is not to create something world-changing, but simply attempt to create or improve something.

Think about it this way, you do not have to create something massive in order for it to be meaningful. The emphasis should

rather be on an *attempt* to create value – however small it may be.

## **The Price of Being a Creator**

This brings us to the most important lesson we can learn from Arthur Fry and the invention of Post-It Notes. When the world presents you with something interesting, challenging or curious, choose to do something about it. However, be forewarned that everyone might not necessarily share your enthusiasm and it would not be uncommon to be criticized for your ideas or solutions.

If others do not recognize the problem themselves, they will certainly scoff at your solution. Think about that for a moment.

Being a creator requires a certain level of selflessness as you often need to put the needs of other above that of yourself. In fact, it would be fair to say that successful creators often view themselves to be in the service of others.

As a creator you choose to get into the rough on the playing field instead of conveniently sitting in the stands as a spectator. You will choose to take the road less travelled and often this is

accompanied with a certain sense of uncertainty and even vulnerability. You should understand that you will invariably stand out from the crowd, but above all, you should be comfortable with this notion.

Choose to be a creator in a world filled with people who choose to be consumers of the ideas of others. Surely you have heard the expression “Why did I not think about this?” Well, in future, experiment to improve something that has been bothering you for some time. Consider the problem and then consider alternatives to improve it. You will be pleasantly surprised how many options there might be.

The world needs ordinary people (like ourselves) to create things and also to create ideas in a simplistic manner. We need employees who take initiative and improve things, entrepreneurs who design things and engineers who build things. We need more leaders, not more followers. We need more creators, not more consumers of the ideas of others.

# **Practical Examples of Creators in Everyday Life**

- Teach yourself the culinary skills of the dishes you enjoy and cook delicious home-made meals instead of opting for take-outs
- Start a book club or blog about a topic you are passionate about instead of enjoying your hobby on your own
- Share your knowledge and experience with co-workers and in doing so, become a mentor and fulfil an influential role in the personal lives and career development of others.
- If you have a special skill or talent, become a coach and make an effort to transfer these skills to someone else.
- Instead of sitting at home watching television, take up a creative hobby such as designing jewelry or writing a novel.
- Consider the specific skills and knowledge you have and consider sharing this with others by designing a pamphlet or sharing it at informal occasions.

Following from the above, perhaps the most important thing to understand is that creators do not only create for themselves, but also for others. In fact, creating something is the perfect

way to avoid wasting the precious moments we have been given on this earth to enjoy with others.

To contribute, to create, to chip into the world around you and add your line to the world's story – that is a life well lived.

That said, what will you create today?