

Part I

Rediscover Your Creative Spark



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Chapter One

What Is the Firefly Effect?

Do you remember . . .

- . . . the magic of a childhood summer evening?*
- . . . catching fireflies with your friends?*
- . . . watching in awe as they lit up the night?*

The Firefly Effect will change how you discover and apply creativity within your team to get results. A lone firefly—like the lone genius—does not ignite the imagination of others. It takes the brilliant light of many, and the creative effort of the entire team, to truly spark innovation with impact. You will learn about proven tools and techniques that have already generated qualitative and quantitative results for hundreds of teams in such companies as Coca-Cola, Home Depot, and AT&T. The use of the “firefly hunt” metaphor—as well as facts about these fascinating creatures—along with actual client examples will make the process easy to understand, to remember, and to achieve.

So what exactly is the Firefly Effect? Well, it is the behavior on display anytime you see children chase fireflies. You might notice that:

- Few children chase fireflies alone. The excitement comes from the sharing of effort and results with others.
- Everyone is clear on what the goal is—to catch fireflies—and enthusiasm remains high, because their target is so well understood and so simple.
- Each individual knows his or her task. No one needs—or wants—a dictating leader.
- Children do not criticize one another on a good firefly hunt. Everyone is clearly giving his or her best effort.
- The group eagerly seeks out new and better ways to get to realize a successful result.
- In the end, there is joy in what they accomplished together.

This, in essence, is the Firefly Effect. It is first about *the individual*—how every one of us can rediscover our unique and creative talents and best apply these to enhance the group's experience. Second, it is about *the leader*—how to be an almost invisible role model for inspiring others to do their best work. Third, it is about *the team*—using their individual talents collectively to focus on the critical business challenges and opportunities, instead of focusing their attention inward on petty personal differences. Finally, it is about *the organization*—having achieved powerful results as one team, then becoming a spark for the change that's needed in other parts of the company so that you're all ultimately working with a one-team mind-set.

Before we go further, I should clarify what I mean by creativity, and the scope of what we are undertaking here. My office is filled with books I have read on developing wacky, brainstorming prompts and driving organizational creativity. While many of these contain great tips and tools for discovering new product ideas—and I have used them with marketing teams for that very purpose—regular business teams focus most often on finding effective ways to capitalize on business

opportunities and solve tough challenges. I am not trying to incite a creativity revolution across entire companies. I merely want to provide tools that can help guide you down a path that will dramatically improve your team's effectiveness.

Your time is valuable and limited. If you lead teams, my promise to you is that reading this book will be worth your while. I know that this is a bold promise; yet I choose to make it, because I have written the book with you in mind. Team leaders—along with aspiring team leaders and ambitious team members—will find new insights and approaches that will make you even more effective in your role. Your entire team will benefit from reading this book and together applying what you learn.

To quote Samuel Johnson, "People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed." My hope is to remind you, in meaningful and memorable ways, of those unique differences that truly distinguish the very best aspects of powerful teams. These things are not hard to understand, but will require the group members' commitment to stay on track. I have shown teams that once they take that first step and thereby experience—and celebrate—their early successes, a magical transformation occurs. And the momentum of their collective results sparks new levels of team effectiveness.

Each chapter will be brief and to the point, while also being fun, entertaining, and memorable through the use of firefly analogies and stories designed to create a flash of "Aha!" My goal is to create a handy field guide that can be used and referred to repeatedly. Here is a partial listing of topics to be covered:

- What to do when the fireflies don't show up (or when creativity dries up).
- How to know when it's time to find a new meadow (or a new approach, place, or process).
- What to do if the leader is keeping too tight a lid on the jar (and team innovation is gasping for air).
- How to get inventive when it rains on your firefly hunt (or parade of ideas).

- What happens when everyone is too busy to join in (and group problems remain unresolved).
- How synchronizing makes everyone's light brighter (and how to tap into the power of synergized effort).

You can create the Firefly Effect in your team, group, or organization; and I will show you how to go about doing so. The first step on this path is to “Rediscover Your Creative Spark” (Part I). You have creative power within you, and the steps in this book will help you tap into it. You will find it in yourself to be alive and driven to do a great job.

Our journey continues with an exploration of the two critical roles of leadership. “Creating the Right Environment” (Part II) considers the new direction and calling for leaders to create a fertile environment for breakthrough creativity and business results. An appreciation of the unique talents and perspectives of each member, along with an unshakable foundation of trust are critical elements of team development. Once this groundwork is laid, conflict takes on a completely new meaning when viewed constructively as creative abrasion that leads to incredible breakthroughs.

Your team is undoubtedly comprised of a group of individuals who likely have very different personalities, talents, experiences, and points of view. How do very diverse people capitalize on their strengths? By “Targeting Team Energy” (Part III), all members of a team will have—despite their differences—a clear, common picture of the road on which they are traveling, the important mile markers, and guard-rails for how we will work together.

Your team will truly be “Firing on All Cylinders” (Part IV) when you gain an insider's perspective on the secrets of powerful collaboration, including how to maximize your time together, reach decisions based on each person's candid input, and to hold each other accountable for honoring commitments.

Creativity really occurs when the fieldwork completed in the first four sections leads to “Sparking Creativity” (Part V). This section shows exactly how to do this, with creativity boosters, fixes for when the fireflies (aka creativity) don't show up, and dealing with colliding team purposes.

The grand finale is a light show beyond compare—the magical synchronicity of thousands of fireflies. “Sync—The Magic” (Part VI) will renew your belief in the possible, and will show you that by experimenting with what you have learned, you can individually shine like never before. You will see how your role as leader is more empowering and fulfilling than you could ever have imagined, and the team and the organization as a whole will reach new heights of breakthrough performance.

My memory of chasing fireflies—of gathering them and having fun with those close to me as we all strove to achieve a common purpose—was so powerful for me that I chose to name my company after it: FireFly Facilitation. I have spent the past 10 years pursuing my passion by working with leaders to help them build more successful teams. *The Firefly Effect* is my way of sharing what I have taught and learned throughout the process. Now—let’s begin a new chapter about being part of a highly effective team!

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