

## **Leadership for Originality**

**by Shelley Dunstone**

*“All good things that exist are the fruits of originality.” - John Stuart Mill (19<sup>th</sup> century politician and philosopher)*

As the world gets more competitive and products and services are commoditized at a faster rate than ever before, we cannot get ahead by doing things the same way we have always done them. We have to continually seek out new possibilities, imagine a new future and do whatever is needed to adapt to changing conditions.

In this constant quest for competitive advantage, new styles of leadership are needed. Leaders need to harness the ability, enthusiasm and originality of everyone in the business. A constant flow of new thinking is required. Everyone has the potential to think creatively. Some people need more encouragement than others to do so. People need to know that original thinking is part of their job, however routinised the job appears to be. The working environment needs to facilitate the flow of ideas. Employees who are involved in creating the future are more engaged in their work than those who are just told what to do.

Leaders who are serious about innovation:

- Make sure everyone understands the vision and strategy
- Are creative in their choice of where to focus their innovation effort
- Understand people’s different strengths and where in the process they are most effective
- Challenge all assumptions, and encourages others to do so too
- Ask as often as they tell
- Admit they don’t have all the answers
- Ask for many different answers
- Allow time for people time to think
- Create opportunities for diverse groups of people from different areas of the business to come together
- Give people scope to experiment
- Extract learning from experiments
- Maintain a balance between short-term and long-term objectives
- Model the behaviours and mental attitudes they seek in others, paying attention to their words, actions and reactions.

Your business is unique because of the unique mix of experience and skills in it. Tap into these and enjoy the fruits of originality.