CHAPTER 1

Mood

Mood is the attitudes, feelings, and emotions that create the context for innovation and creativity.

Mood is one of those you-know-it-when-you-see-it kinds of things. You've probably had the experience of walking into a café, taking a quick look around, and walking right back out. Just didn't feel right. Or you drop off your child at day care, and there's something about all those kids running around that makes you want to sit on the floor and start playing with Legos. That's mood in action. You may not be able to articulate exactly what it is, but you definitely know how it makes you feel. What's a lot less intuitive, though, is the impact mood can have on your creativity. Just think of the last brainstorming session or uninspired team meeting you attended.

You got there at 8:30 sharp, and it was just the two of you—you and the only other person who got there on time. No windows. One of the fluorescent tubes in the ceiling was

flickering so faintly that you could barely notice it, but within fifteen minutes, it gave you a pounding headache. One tile in the ceiling had been inexplicably missing for months, and another one had a new brown stain blossoming from its center. The big heavy table was covered in fingerprints, scratches, and faded stains, and all of the chairs were uncomfortable, despite their fancy adjustable features. You knew that one chair was dangerous—lean back in that thing and you'd end up on the floor—but you could never remember which one it was because they all looked the same. The air was stale and still smelled like pepperoni and onions from the prior day's lunch meeting. The trash can was overflowing with lipstick-covered Styrofoam coffee cups and an old box of donuts. The whiteboard was one of those "smart" devices with features that no one remembered how to use. Years ago someone accidentally used a permanent marker on it, and it still said "AGENDA" in bold blue letters in the upper left corner. You tried to communicate to the person sitting across from you, but there was something about the acoustics in the room that smothered words as they came out of your mouth. It was like talking through a pillow. So you sat in silence, waiting for the allotted period of unchecked creativity to begin.

Ah, yes. The conference room. The place where corporate America comes to create. And, sadly, a place we've all been. Fortunately, it doesn't have to be this way. There are ways to change the mood in your organization from an energy suck to something that actually stimulates creativity. And that's exactly what I'm going to show you how to do in this chapter.

Mood is the first of our five M's for a reason: the success or failure of your attempts to inspire your organization and change the way it thinks and operates is often determined long

before you begin applying any specific tools or approaches. If you get the mood wrong, you may not even get a chance to try the other drivers of inspiration and innovation, because mood is the foundation for everything else.

There are three very important ways to shift the mood and inspire people within your organization:

- Create purposeful disruptions
- Ask provocative questions and make bold statements
- Make physical changes

Let's take a look at these three mood-changers in detail.

Create Purposeful Disruptions

Deliberately knocking a group's physical and mental dynamics off course, what I call a *purposeful disruption,* is a great mood-altering tool that every leader should use. Keep in mind that there's a very clear difference between an engineered experience that's going to take people out of their current context (like going to a farm to talk about leadership) and a truly spontaneous purposeful disruption. It takes intuition and a healthy tolerance for risk to fully disrupt a moment or interrupt a ritual and shift the mood. But hey, you're a leader: that's your job. Try it out a few times and you'll see the benefits in the renewed energy and passion of your team.

I was saved by a purposeful disruption on the day I got married to Jill.

The St. Francis Borgia Church in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, was packed. I was up at the altar, sweating and trying not to fog up my glasses with the tears of joy I was trying to hold back. I just wanted to get the whole thing going. The violin

player had started up, and I could see a glimpse of Jill, looking beautiful at the other end of the church.

Just as Jill was about to make her first step toward me, my Uncle Mitch stood up and addressed the entire group. My heart stopped. Uncle Mitch is a big guy who's pretty much a clone of the Archie Bunker character from the classic television sit-com *All in the Family*. He had on a short, fat tie, and he spoke with a chewed up (and, fortunately, unlit) cigar hanging precariously out of the corner of his mouth.

"Wait a minute! Just hold on here," he exclaimed to the confounded guests. "Aren't we here to get to know each other? Andy would want us to mix it up!"

Mitch hadn't consulted me about this, and, frankly, I really didn't care where people were sitting. I just wanted to get married. From my viewpoint at the front of the church, I could see the danger in Uncle Mitch's call to action. Two women on opposite sides of the aisle were wearing the same dress, and a lot of people were squirming in their seats, unsettled by this off-the-wall request to get up and mingle. Would they actually get along? Would they think my family was good enough? Did they already think we were all as nuts as Uncle Mitch?

There was confusion at first, then nervous laughter. But within just a few moments, Uncle Mitch had everyone up shaking hands with the people around them. After about ten minutes of this mini cocktail party, people gradually found new seats and silently waited for the ceremony to start again. Not only did this purposeful disruption change the guests' mood and their experience of the wedding, but it made the reception an overwhelming success. The families had a jump-start on getting to know each other, and the payoff was exceptional.

Disrupting a ritual can have a powerful effect, but sometimes the best way to influence mood is to create completely

new rituals. I learned this lesson from one of my former teammates, a guy named Chip Leon. Chip was always the first person in the office. One day, he decided to try something completely different from his regular morning routine. So he waited in the parking lot until the first of his coworkers drove in. As soon as she stepped out of her car, Chip gave her a standing ovation. The woman was a little taken aback, but after a few seconds she started smiling. On the spot, she and Chip decided to greet the third person to arrive in the same way. Then three of them applauded the fourth, and so on. I'm not going to tell you that these A.M. Cheers (as we call them now) led to any specific inspirational breakthroughs. But I do know that they changed the mood in the office for the rest of the day—all because of one person's spur-of-the moment decision to stir up his morning routine. In fact, A.M. Cheers have been such a success at boosting mood that we now use them as part of our corporate training for new hires. We ask one of the group to leave the room, count to ten, and step back in—to a loud burst of applause.

My team functions as a lab, testing and learning in any capacity that we can. One of our most surprising learning experiences took place in a client session with a Nike executive team. The team members were working toward creating a unified vision and strategy, and they needed a breakthrough to bring them all into alignment. That particular year, budgets were under heavy scrutiny, and each executive had a list of his or her own priorities. The leader of this group knew that collapsing some of the strategies was the most efficient—and effective—way to achieve the organization's broader goals. But to do that, the group members would have to connect as they never had before, so that they could see each other's priorities in a new and fresh way.

We knew that it would take a radical head snap to grab this group's attention. They were successful individually and as a group, so why should they worry about further collaboration? To answer that question, we created an EUK Event (Experience, Understanding, Knowledge—we talk more about these events in Chapter Three, Mechanisms) that would take the group into the field. We met the Nike team at the Ritz-Carlton in Portland over scones and tea, which the group interpreted to mean that they were headed into yet another executive meeting with all the usual dynamics. Then, to their surprise, we told them to join us on the train to Seattle. Once we arrived at the city, we asked everyone in our party to look at more stuff and think about it harder, all in service of seeing themselves as a different kind of working group.

The daylong journey began at the public bus stop. We walked the members of our group up to the corner and handed one of them a full bouquet of Gerbera daisies, with instructions to give the flowers to the first person to step off the incoming bus. The request definitely grabbed the group's attention. When the first rider alighted from the bus, the Nike team member handed her the flowers. As the woman smiled with delight, one of us asked her a simple question: What had she done—that morning, the prior week, or in her lifetime—to deserve this unexpected gift? The woman answered our question with conviction: she was a teacher who had gone through deep budget cuts and yet managed to keep the most critical resources available to her students; she tutored an underprivileged child when she knew the parents could not; for twenty-five years, she had been giving hope to children who might not have gotten it otherwise. With that, she walked off, flowers in hand and head held high.

After taking a minute to process the exchange, we chatted, right there on the corner, about the experience. The Nike executives shared their beliefs about doing the right thing, about how much of what they do goes unnoticed, how they are always trying to do it in the context of the bigger picture, and how they could benefit from more collaboration to get through the driving agendas they all owned. The simple act of recognition for recognition's sake—one question and a handful of flowers—led us to discover how much we all were accomplishing as individuals, but how much more potential there was in the power of collaboration.

On that corner, the members of the executive team developed their new approach to work: more connection to each other, more appreciation of the others' agendas and efforts, and more willingness to ask about and listen to another person's story—things that hadn't been happening at the rate and frequency that they should have been. The team embarked on a new conversation that netted a new outcome.

Later, as we canvassed the tourist area of Seattle, we noticed vendors, shopkeepers, and street musicians with single-stem Gerbera daisies. When we stopped at one busy corner to ask a guitar player where he got his flower, he said, "A woman asked me why I deserved a flower. I told her and she gave it to me . . . it's a cool day." The ripple effect of this kind of purposeful disruption never ceases to amaze me. Begin with an inspirational act of beauty and watch it cascade through the streets of the city—or your organization.

The words you use, the ways you present yourself—even small details matter, because they all work together to ultimately define the context for creativity and the mood of your organization. Let's look at some examples of how words and

Focus on Who People Are, Not on What They Do

In my view, titles and org charts should be set aside while creating ideas. When I founded Play two decades ago, I wanted to create a different kind of organization, one where the mood for innovation was strong and positive. Over lunch one day, one of my team members at the time, Patty Devlin, suggested that instead of the title of CEO, I call myself the person "In Charge of What's Next." This title sent a clear sign to everyone within the organization and to my clients that my role was not managing and executing—I was there to think ahead and find new opportunities for growth. Today, everyone at Prophet chooses his or her own title. Of course, alternative titles don't change the daily activities we need to do to keep the business running, but they do personalize our approach and start new kinds of conversations.

What message does your current title convey? What title would you choose if you had an option? What title would capture the essence of who you are and the value you deliver to your organization? Come up with a title that expresses that idea—not what you do, but who you are—and then *be* that every second of every day.

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language can transform expectations and change the mood in any organization.

Ask Provocative Questions

A well-placed, provocative question can completely shift the mood of an individual or team by inviting people to think aloud with you. These questions are especially useful in changing the dynamic of a working session. Ideally, they should be abstract or open ended, and the answers shouldn't be easy.

I brought the power of one provocative question to life one day while working on innovation with a global financial institution. I had been working with the company's thirty-member executive team to articulate and outline their five-year innovation strategy. Products, culture, technology, acquisitions, product portfolio, customer segmentation, and organization design were all part of the conversation—as they should have been. But the breadth of the topic had paralyzed the team. As we worked through the conversation, the difficulties became more complex and wiry, as happens so often with an executive team whose members (1) each have an opinion and (2) have years of context informing their point of view.

To move the group forward, I had to unleash the team members' intuition and allow them to "do" rather than "talk." I unleashed them with one question: "So what are you going to do?" With that question lingering in the air, I told them I would return in an hour, and they would report back on the priorities that would set the innovation agenda on its way with full wind in the sails. Upon my return, there was a new energy in the room as the teams huddled around work plans and mind maps. Cutting through the clutter and asking a group of seasoned professionals to "do"—simply to do, not talk—turned their innovation strategy efforts around and unlocked their potential. Never underestimate the power of a simple, provocative question to create a more dynamic, inspirational mood.

Here are some of my favorite provocative questions:

- What's next?
- What don't we know?
- What are we going to do?
- When did you last create something?

- What's relevant?
- What questions should we be asking?
- What's the most important thing?
- What would make you a little more uncomfortable?
- What would be your first move as CEO?
- What is the world telling you?
- How could you put yourself out of business?
- What should we start, stop, and continue?
- How much time have you thought about your team today?
- How much time do you set aside for yourself?
- When is the last time you really looked outside your business, your industry, or your world?
- What's the Bigger Big?
- What could go wrong?
- What could go very right?
- Why should we care?

Make Bold Statements

In addition to asking provocative questions, you can shake up the mood of your organization by creating a forum for bold statements. You want statements that create a little controversy. The statement should fit the topic and objective at hand, while challenging listeners to stretch their thinking. It should also get them to engage you in a discussion instead of just sitting back and listening to (or ignoring) you.

A few years ago, I attended a huge festival for people in the movie business. A famous Hollywood director was one of the keynote speakers. The audience was filled with industry experts and category leaders who had come to hear a legend talk about the film business. The director said many interesting

Whatchathinkin?

You never know where a profound thought can come from. Asking someone, anyone, "Whatchathinkin?" creates a dynamic and participatory environment. It demonstrates that all people and ideas are valued and valid. From a cabbie to a CEO, I never pass up the opportunity to ask, "Whatchathinkin?"

Back in early 2000, I was in an executive meeting for a Silicon Valley tech company. The conversation was going around and around, with each executive essentially posturing for the room by repeating what the previous one had said. There was one person in the meeting who had not spoken up yet, so I pointed to him and asked, "Whatchathinkin?" It turned out that this young man was a junior member sitting in to take notes for an absent executive. Everyone was surprised that I even called on him. But he provided a point of view for the conversation that changed the entire mood of the room. This junior person was in customer service and offered a new perspective on sales and distribution that set a new course of thinking around strategies. A sales perspective on distribution. You never know where a great idea can come from.

Asking your teammates, "Whatchathinkin?" may not yield anything earth-shattering. But then again, it might.

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things, but he made an especially provocative statement when he announced, "The majority of the blockbuster films you'll enjoy in the future—the ones that bring in $200 million—will be made for less than $15 million." Looking around the room, I could tell that the audience members—people who generally don't think twice about dropping $100 million to make a film—were already starting to think about things differently. He had clearly challenged the paradigm. About a

year-and-a-half later, the movie *Borat* came out. It cost something like $18 million to make and within months had grossed over $250 million.

Margaret Lewis, the president of Hospital Corporation of America's (HCA's) capital division, completely changed the way I thought about the value of inspiration with this bold statement: "There are no new business strategies." In response to my "What? What do you mean by that?" questions, Margaret explained that modern businesses have figured out all the ways to make things cheaper, faster, and more profitable, and as a result, there aren't any other new ways to do business. Instead, businesses need to rely on *inspiration* as the fuel for informing existing strategies and making them more engaging and productive.

Margaret's bold statement sums up her approach to management, but it also has inspired a change in mood throughout her organization. This simple yet elegant statement has led her teams across the hospital chain to seek out inspiration as a catalyst for changing the way they create and implement business strategies. The people at HCA have not allowed regulatory, financial, legislative, and other constraints to restrict the way they look at the hospital's three core strategic concerns: the emergency room, doctor relationships, and the patient stay. As the teams at HCA continue to add input to the creative equation for each of the organization's strategies, they have developed new and different approaches, which have resulted in better outcomes.[1]

Another example of using a bold statement to reset mood comes from my friend Kent Liffick, formerly of IndyCar racing. Kent is one of the best sports marketers working today, and for a very simple reason: he asks provocative questions, rather

than accepting the norms of a very traditional system. Sponsorships have advanced light-years from the early 1980s of radio simulcast, signage, and cross promotions, but most of them continue to be little more than a marketing opportunity gone bad. As a marketer, I seldom see sports sponsorships that absolutely fit and seem to take full advantage of the brand's and the property's assets. When he confronted this problem with IndyCar, Kent asked a big question and got bold results. He asked his client: "If this was the last piece of exposure your company would ever have, what would you do with it?" Knowing that IndyCar is one of the most exotic and exciting sports in the world, Kent was tireless in making sure the sponsors' assets intersected at every touch point. His bold question immediately reframed the challenge that he and his clients were working to resolve, and surrounded that work with a mood of urgency and possibility.[2]

Use Simple Language

Provocative questions and bold statements don't require flowery language in order to effectively shift mood. Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop, told me two things that continue to serve as mechanisms to inspire thinking within her company—and that are excellent examples of the power of simple language. She shared the first idea with me over dinner in a French restaurant in Denmark. We were talking about passion and how important it is for driving change in any organization. When I asked her why that was so, she replied, "Passion persuades." Later, at London's Heathrow Airport, I told Anita that she was the most inspiring person I'd ever known. When I asked her to give me one last piece of advice before I boarded my plane back to Virginia, she replied with

another simple statement: "Words create the world." Anita has since passed away, but I will always be grateful to her for the gift of passion and the bold and powerful ideas she shared with me in such simple but eloquent words.[3]

"Passion persuades." "Words create the world." The messages of these simple sentences are incredibly important. There is nothing more powerful for creating change than passion. Passion is the fuel that gives ideas power and makes any organization run. At the same time, words are the tools we use to express our passion and our ideas, so it's critical that every leader be purposeful with words. Together, both of Anita's comments have helped me create better things throughout my career—and have helped me help my clients do the same.

Take John Unwin, for example. John is a special CEO. He has twenty-five years of hotel and resort management experience that includes running Caesar's Palace and the San Francisco Fairmont. He helped guide Ian Schrager's hotels, and today serves as CEO of The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, a unique luxury resort in the heart of the Las Vegas Strip. John has genuine passion, *real* passion, that he has transferred to his team—and his business. Talk about a resort that is going to change its category. Rooms with expansive, one-of-a-kind private terraces that allow guests to step outside and take in sweeping views of the Las Vegas skyline are just one of the amazing offerings that set this property apart.

We helped John and his team launch the new resort brand to his top 150 employees months before the opening. To provide John with the perfect backdrop to kick off the event, we picked the Neon Museum, ten minutes down the expressway from the Strip. The museum's "boneyard" holds the cast-off neon signs from every major hotel, casino,

and other establishment in Vegas—the Silver Slipper, the Golden Nugget, the Stardust, and so on. We drove the group to the site of this glittering collection in three fifty-passenger buses and then gathered them around John to hear him tell his story. And he did it beautifully. With dozens of giant neon signs as his backdrop, John jumped up on a rickety picnic table and talked about one of his first experiences in Las Vegas—the magical evening he spent in the legendary Bacchanal Room in Caesar's Palace. John's words painted a picture of old Vegas that sparked his team's imagination as they prepared to help create the next chapter in the city's history and to make The Cosmopolitan a leader in its industry. These 150 people stood riveted because of John's conviction, his humor, realness, and passion for change—change that would encompass an industry and a city, not just a resort.

After John finished his talk, we bused the group back to The Cosmopolitan, which was still under construction. There, we gathered the first 150 members of The Cosmopolitan team in a circle in the hotel's unfinished ballroom, and, in a symbolic moment, we handed out markers and asked them to remove their hard hats, sign them, and pass them to the next person for his or her signature. When everyone's hat had made its way around the circle, it held the signature of every person in the group—colleagues who were about to embark on an amazing journey along with John. The full rotation took an awkward twenty-two minutes, and at one point, I became concerned that the group was growing restless. But when I tried to cut it short, John told me to let it roll. This was a part of the journey we had laid out, and he wanted to use it to fire their passion and to emphasize—149 times—their role in this collective venture. John's magical touch shines through in these moments, which

people remember and use as a guiding beacon. John's passion persuades his team to always look for meaningful change. And they will. I'm convinced.[4]

Take a minute and think about the language you use on a day-to-day basis and the impact it has on the mood of your organization. What underlying meanings might you be communicating to your group, and how do they shape your ability to communicate on an authentic level? Can you change the way you and your team interact by saying what you actually mean? Do you succumb to corporate-speak? Are you sacrificing inspiration for efficiency?

Make Physical Changes

Perhaps the easiest (and cheapest) way to start setting or shifting your team's mood is simply to go somewhere else. Now, I know that the idea of changing the physical environment to change thinking is hardly a new one, but keep these two ideas in mind:

1. The three-dimensional environment is only half of the equation—probably the less important half. The other part, which I'll get to in the next chapter, is mental.
2. When you're thinking about alternative surroundings for working with your team, you've got to get beyond the traditional nature walks and sporting events. Push yourself a little. It's okay, go ahead.

A few years ago, we were hired by a financial services company whose leaders wanted to find out why their employees weren't thinking big enough. Situated in a typical suburban office park, the company designated each of its many buildings by number—"Building 1," "Building 2," and so on—

expressing a lack of personality that's never an encouraging sign when a company claims creativity as an organizational value.

As I walked through the parking lot toward the entrance, I was almost bowled over by a stream of employees on their way out. It was close to noon on a beautiful, sunny day, so I naturally assumed they were all in a hurry to enjoy their time off—parks, healthy walks, you know, get some fresh air. Turns out, most of them weren't actually going anywhere. Instead, they got into their cars and stayed there, unpacking their bag lunches, drinking soda, reading books, and listening to the radio. Were things really so bad inside that employees had to flee to their cars to find some peace? (The whole scene reminded me of a poem I once read in which the poet talks about people leaving their car windows cracked when they go into work—not in an effort to keep the car cool, but because they leave 75 percent of themselves behind when they go in to work, and want to be sure that a part of them can still breathe.)

As I entered Building 2, I began to understand the exodus to the parking lot. The walls were dark and cold, the floors were dark and cold, and the furniture was dark and cold. The security guard looked up from his bag of fried pork rinds just long enough to ask me to sign in, and I noticed that right behind him, bolted to the wall, was the only bit of color in the place: a bright red defibrillator—the one thing in the building guaranteed to get your heart going. What a metaphor. The pall extended to the graveyard of cubicles inside, which remained absolutely silent even after the lunch crowd returned. All around me, there were people with their heads down, hushed conversations, closed doors. Not a sound anywhere. I broke out my pack of Bubblicious gum, and when I started noisily unwrapping a piece, heads spun toward me as if I'd set off a grenade. How could anyone find inspiration in that dead zone?

Other companies understand the link between environment and creativity, and one great example is GE. GE is all about leadership, and has been for years. Today, the company continues to write new chapters in the book of global corporate leadership. Susan Peters, the chief learning officer and one of my longest-standing business crushes (more on those crushes later), has helped define and shape leadership at GE over the course of the organization's many iterations. Susan has an uncanny combination of intelligence and intuition, and she is, without a doubt, one of the strongest strategic ''people-based'' executives I've ever worked with. Susan knew that Crotonville, the GE corporate development center famed for its best-in-class executive leadership, helps define leadership at GE and around the world. So when she began reimagining the Crotonville campus, Susan asked my team to help. She wanted to create a new look and feel for every aspect of the campus—its environment, experience, content, and other assets.[5]

Big projects start with a big vision, but they really begin taking shape through small actions. We developed work teams to address a number of needs for the new campus, such as more opportunities to network, new technology, and creative and fun evening activities. The teams also activated a number of quick-win ideas, such as offering global newspapers in the lobbies and new technology in the guest rooms. But it all came to life when we added a few coats of paint and a makeshift desk in one of the Crotonville administrative offices. My teammates Barry Saunders, Hillary deRoo, and Lauren Mirsky had been spending quite a bit of time at the campus and were in need of a work area. In keeping with the laboratory mentality we were trying to instill in the Crotonville team, we worked with the campus facilities team to design an eight-by-ten-foot room

that would be a lively standout in a sea of tan offices. Picture it: bright green walls (one gallon of paint at $14.00); yellow sawhorses from Lowes ($25.00 each) supporting an eight-foot board (salvaged from the maintenance department) and five high stools ($26.00 each). And the fancy accessory? Five elbow-bending white lights affixed to the table ($7.99 per light).

As we set up camp in the new office, ready to begin a week of reinvention and discovery, a flood of Crotonville teammates streamed in to tell some story or express some opinion about the room. They said the seats were too high but might be interesting; the green walls were too loud, but full of energy; the desk was too raw, but screamed to have ideas generated on it; the lights were too dull, but might be a good effect for late-night dream sessions. The room sparked a debate. A conversation. A point of view. It was the farthest thing the Crotonville team could imagine from the typical L-shaped desk and credenza—and that was the point. That thirty-minute Monday-morning conversation became the catalyst to spark the team's thinking about the rest of the fifty-nine acres and all its amazing facilities. A physical change that cost a few hundred dollars helped inspire us to think about the entire project with more energy and passion. Small physical changes helped people see possibilities and have a fresh conversation.

Shake Up People—Even the Creatives

Not long ago, my colleague Ben Armbruster and I met with a team of executives from Disney. Our first meeting was at our office loft, which is dynamic, interactive, and deliberately designed to encourage creativity and inspiration. But Disney's offices are too (after all, they *are*) Disney. So to shake things

up a bit, Ben grabbed a flipchart, an easel, and a handful of markers and announced that we were going to move the whole group to the nearby Hollywood cemetery—which has nothing to do with the film industry, but is a very famous cemetery in Richmond, Virginia, named long ago for its many holly trees. To his great credit, Disney executive Duncan Wardle said, in his inimitable British accent, "Right-o, lads, off we go!" and we relocated to the South's version of "Hollywood," where we spent the next six hours talking—quite productively—about how Disney could do things differently.[6]

Duncan and another Disney cast member, Victoria Finn, later referred to the cemetery trip as "forced reflection."[7] It made us all step back, pause, and create great things. Over the course of the next two years, I helped Disney's Creative Inc. team put inspirational and unexpected locations at the heart of its creative ideation and transform the company's approach to building great ideas. I have joined the Disney team at a graffiti studio in Los Angeles, where we tagged a wall in the alley, and I have watched them interact with children in afterschool tutoring programs and foster homes. That moment in the cemetery was a wake-up call to the creative ideation team at Disney, reminding them that even an organization with a decidedly creative output could benefit from shifting the mood of their internal operation.

Change Your Physical Identity to Change the Way You Think

Physically taking people outside their normal frame of reference can offer tremendous insight into the way those people think. We worked with a major credit card company looking for new ways to market products to people who have poor (or no)

credit—students, immigrants, people who might have had a bankruptcy or two under their belt, and so on. Judging from the cars that pulled up in front of our building, we were pretty sure that no one on the team was in that particular demographic. Most of them had no clue what it was like to live paycheck to paycheck or to have to choose between paying an overdue credit card bill or buying groceries.

Our engagement with them started out like any other corporate meeting—pastries and coffee, State of the Union, introductions. Then we ushered everyone downstairs, where a loud, rumbling city bus was waiting. Judging from the wide eyes and puzzled expressions, I think it's safe to say that very few of the folks on the team had ever been on a city bus. Nevertheless, we piled in and headed to a thrift store. We gave each person on the bus $20 and told them that they had to go inside the store and buy themselves an outfit to wear for the rest of the day. At first they thought we were kidding, but the resolute look on our team members' faces said otherwise.

Thirty minutes later, we were back on the bus. Everyone, including our team, wore his or her new clothes for the rest of the day as we talked to consumers, followed new routines, and explored what it means to live at the bottom of the financial pyramid. (Well, not everyone: in an interesting twist, one agency partner took a different approach, and instead bought one of the thrift store mannequins, which he carried around with him for the rest of the day.) The pure inspiration that came from altering our physical appearance gave the group a tactile, experiential, and three-dimensional insight into the client's customer base and allowed the company to create a very successful set of new products and offerings.

Build It Right, or They Might Not Come

Another way to use our three-dimensional surroundings to shift mood is to set aside (or, if you've got the budget, to specially build) innovation areas. But be careful. Even though our physical working environment clearly has a major impact on our behavior and interactions, it's not magic.

One Fortune 100 client of ours set up a gorgeous outdoor area for meetings and conversations, hoping to energize the staff and trigger fresher ideas. The idea was a good one, but it wasn't well executed. The new "innovation area" was right outside the windows of the company's C-suite. No one on the staff wanted to use the area, for fear that the senior execs would look out and think they were loafing in the sun. Eventually, the abandoned area became a symbol for "nice idea, bad execution."

A few years ago, one of our clients was excited to show us the brand-new innovation areas they'd spent more than $2 million to build within their eighty-thousand-square-foot facility. The new areas were strategically located in the center of every floor and were appointed with flat-screen monitors, magazines for inspiration, electronic whiteboards, snacks, drinks, and funky furniture that screamed, "Sit on me and be creative!" The problem? Tacked to the wall next to one of the entrances was a crude, handwritten sign that said, "Please be quiet. People are working." Not surprisingly, that innovation area—and all the other ones I looked at—were empty. Clearly, the prevailing attitude in the company was that working and having a conversation in an innovation area were mutually exclusive activities, and that "value delivery" meant sitting quietly at a desk. *Boy, I thought, have we got a long way to go . . .*

Segregated innovation areas can have a negative effect on an organization's mood. They can give people the impression that

innovation is supposed to happen only in specific "corrals." If people walk by and the areas are empty, the whole organization can begin to feel devoid of life and creativity. And if your attitudes and policies contradict the atmosphere of innovation, you just waste time and money by setting up special spaces for

Have You Ever Had a Drink?

I was driving through Phoenix, the top of my rental convertible down, in the blazing heat of summer, when I developed a craving for a cold Margarita. I found a Mexican dive and had a great drink. I saw behind the bar a page from a magazine that listed "nine places that you have to have a drink." I copied down the list, and so far, I've checked off seven of them. All that's left are numbers 7 and 8. Part of the reason I want to work my way through the list is for the drinks. But I also want to experience the places and meet the people who gather there. Take a look at the list. Each place has its own unique mood to absorb:

1. A Sidecar at the St. James Hotel in London
2. A Mint Julep at the Pendennis Club at Louisville on Derby Day
3. A Gimlet at any sleazy lounge in LA
4. A Coke at the San Diego Zoo
5. A gin and tonic at the Mandarin Club overlooking Columbus Circle in Manhattan
6. A spiked lemonade at Prune on the Lower East Side of Manhattan
7. A Sazerac at Smith and Mills in Tribeca in Manhattan
8. A Bellini at the San Piedro hotel in Positano, Italy
9. A Stroh's beer in the bleachers at Tiger Stadium in Detroit

Each drink is special because of the unique context in which I enjoy it, whether it's drinking it where it's made or enjoying the sheer ubiquitous anonymity of an LA lounge. You should create a list of your own experiences and explore as many moods as possible.

THINK

innovation instead of trying to instill a creative atmosphere and mood throughout the organization. It's like giving someone the title of "creative director," which promotes the misguided idea that only one person in the organization has a responsibility for creativity.

In real life, creativity doesn't usually happen while you're sitting alone at a desk. In fact, distractions and working with other people are critical ingredients. Donna Sturgess, the former global head of innovation for GlaxoSmithKline, calls it "blue noise," and uses it to gauge her company's mood. Unlike the white noise of heads-down working, blue noise is a symphony of creativity, the audible sound of energy, collaboration, and curiosity in action.[8] Blue noise can happen anywhere—the chance meeting at the coffeemaker; the team lunch; the overheard conversation that sparks a new thought. Every moment that you or your people aren't interacting is a missed opportunity for creating.

The moral? Before you start making any physical changes, be damned sure that everyone in your organization—from the top down—is ready to make the leap. And challenge your ideas, to be certain that no symbols, titles, words, or artificial limitations get in the way of your efforts to recharge mood by reimagining physical spaces.

Become the CMO (Chief Mood Officer)

In 2009, when we sold Play to Prophet, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* our local newspaper, reported on the story. That by itself isn't particularly impressive. But the next day, I received an envelope with a copy of the article and a personalized note saying, "Great news!" from Tom Silvestri, a good friend who's also the paper's publisher. Receiving that article made me smile

for the rest of the day, and in some small way, boosted the mood of the rest of my team too. A few days later I happened to be at an event that Tom was attending, and I went over and thanked him for sending the article, telling him how much I appreciated that he took the time out of what must be an insanely busy schedule. He told me that he actually does it every day. "People are always saying they don't want to read the paper because there's never any good news. That's simply not true. There are good-news stories every day. And I consider it part of my job to share the news." Now *that* was impressive. So much so that I've started clipping out good-news articles about people or companies I know and sending them along with a quick "Great news!" note.[9]

Tom helped me stumble on to one of the great lessons of leadership—one you won't find on any list of the top traits of effective leaders. It's simply this: part of your job description is setting the mood in your organization. Good mood leads to good environment. Good environment creates a good workplace. And a good workplace is where people want to stay. It doesn't get any better than that.

In 2001, I was in Austin, Texas, visiting GSD&M, the maverick advertising shop. Normally I travel with at least one of my teammates. But that night in Austin, I was all alone. It was late. I'd been traveling across the country all day, thanks to a four-hour delay on the last leg. I decided to distract and reward myself with a big meal. So I asked the concierge at my hotel, "Where can I get a delicious meal for, say, a hundred dollars? I want to spoil myself." She recommended a place right around the corner from the hotel.

I walked in, optimistic and hungry. The joint smelled pretty good. The lighting was nice—low but not too low.

The place had lots of dark wood paneling; cool, modern furnishings; and an overall good vibe. It seemed the perfect place for a guy eating alone. ''Table for one, please,'' I said to the maitre d'.

To my shock, he let out a barely audible ''Tsk tsk,'' as from behind his little podium he took in my wrinkled, well-traveled clothes. He snatched up a menu, barked ''Follow me,'' and whisked off into the dining room.

I hustled after him as he snaked through the maze of tables and rooms. It was Monday night, and the place was pretty much empty. The whole time we were walking, I kept thinking, *Is that my table? Is that my table?* But it never was. My anticipation quickly turned to disappointment when he stopped in front of a tiny, dark table in a back corner next to the kitchen door.

Sorry—that just wasn't going to work for me. I wasn't going to sit there, turned sideways, deliberately staring at a blank wall so I wouldn't have to watch the guy washing dishes. No way. Before the maitre d' had a chance to patronizingly say, ''Here we are, sir,'' I grabbed the menu right out of his hands and looked him right in the face.

''No. No. You follow me,'' I said as I sped back through the restaurant. I chose a seat at the bar, which was open and airy and located right in the middle of all the action, not lost in some dank corner. Now *that* was a proper place to have a nice meal. A place where I could look at more stuff.

Before long, I was having the time of my life chatting with the bartender, watching the Yankees game on the TV above the bar, talking about how much we both loved New York. I found out that he's Croatian. My family is from Serbia, so we talked about our grandparents, their struggles as immigrants,

and all the sacrifices those before us had made to build such a great melting pot of a country. I vividly remember the meal I had that evening: mushroom risotto, freshly baked bread, a few Pilsner Urquells, and a great sampler of sorbets for dessert.

Too often we're told where to sit, what to do, how to act. And too often we blindly go along with the program. But we don't have to—at least not all the time. Consider yourself the CMO (chief mood officer) and take control of setting and reframing the mood at your organization. "No. No. You follow me" is a very powerful phrase. Try it out. To be clear, the point is not that you are demanding that people actually follow you. Rather, it's that you don't have to take what you are given when it comes to mood. Instead, take control of your own experience in life and business to create the right mood.

Okay, Now You Try . . .

Before we move on to the next M, Mindset, take a minute to think about the mood of your organization and its ability to inspire creativity and innovation. Ask yourself these questions:

- How many people are smiling as you walk through the halls?
- What percentage of doors are closed? open?
- Are you surprised and delighted at work on a monthly, weekly, or daily basis?
- What time of day do you have a corporate laugh?
- What would happen if you wore name tags that announce your daily mood?