

# CREATING EXTRAORDINARY ORGANIZATIONS

Volume 3, Letter 4  
April 1, 2005

## Daniel Greenberg Oped Piece

*I write this letter for those pioneers who want to move beyond the ordinary to the Extraordinary in creating business organizations.*

*Welcome to Letter 3-4 of Creating Extraordinary Organizations. At the end of the last letter, I told you this letter would continue the beliefs discussion. However, once in awhile an article comes along that is so pertinent to our whole exploration it is worth sharing at once.*

*The current edition of the SVS Journal has a wonderful oped piece by Daniel Greenberg. He is one of the founders of the school and a leading spokesperson for its educational philosophy. He has kindly given me permission to reprint it here with some comparison revisions.*

*I have long seen an almost perfect correlation between our current educational and business organization models. The former is Command and Control for kids, the latter for adults.*

*This article could just as easily be about the business organization system as the educational one. All you have to do is change a few words to move it from one world to the other. I have done this in the article by bolding the **educational words** and adding **[business words]***

## ***Schools [Business Organizations] Don't Live Up to America's Ideals***

***Daniel Greenberg***

Sudbury Valley School Journal, January 2005

“There are a number of fundamental flaws in the currently prevailing **educational [business organization]** system. These flaws undermine the very purpose of the system, which is to **prepare children [enable adults] to become [be]** effective adults in 21<sup>st</sup> century America. These flaws are not cosmetic, or trivial; in fact, they are highly detrimental to the continued ability of this country to remain strong, prosperous, and a model of creative energy and innovation.

Let's begin with some basic facts, which are so well known that they are taken for granted and virtually ignored in the world of **education [business]**. The principles upon which America was founded were summarized in two classic phrases: that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are every person's “inalienable rights”; and that our society is ruled by a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” We are, in other words, a democracy in which every individual has an equal voice, and the right to pursue his/her dreams for a meaningful life.

Furthermore, we are living in a time of rapid change and global inter-connectivity, a time when virtually all the knowledge, skills, and processes of yesteryear are being challenged and replaced.

Of course, everyone acknowledges these facts. In particular, **educators [business managers and proponents]** often pay lip service to them — and then go on to design **schools [business organizations]** that undermine them at every turn!

The individual uniqueness of every human being is central to the American way of life. We pride ourselves on being tolerant of a very wide range of expression and behavior, and on providing a social environment in which people are free to design their lives and control their destiny to a greater extent than anywhere else on earth. Why don't our **schools [business organizations]** reflect these values? Who don't our **schools [business organizations]** welcome diversity, real diversity — not diversity based on skin color or ethnic origin, but diversity of character, passion, and interest?

Why can't every **child [working person]** find his or her own niche, and develop it to whatever extent they wish? I often hear the objection that this would be too chaotic, that **schools [businesses]** could not manage thousands of **children [people]** each pursuing their own life course. But this has been the classic aristocratic objection to liberal democracy! For centuries, learned intellectuals argued that it was impossible to have a free society in which each citizen could conduct their lives as they pleased; that such a society would degenerate quickly into anarchy. History has proven eh objections to be baseless, and they are no longer heard in respected circles. But the very same arguments are pulled out of the dust-closet of history, shaken off, and presented as indisputable when applied to societies of **children [workers/employees]**. Why? And this, in face of clear evidence that, given the opportunity, **children [workers/employees]** are quite capable of following their own individual **educational [life]** paths without reducing their **schools [business]** to chaotic jungles!

In spite of such evidence, our **schools [organizations]** persist in demanding that all **children [workers/employees]** be treated in the same way — that they learn to **read [do their work]** at the same time and in the same manner, that they all be exposed to the same **instruction [training]** regardless of their personal propensities, and that they behave in a uniform manner acceptable to the ruling **authorities [managers]**. And that **children [workers/employees]** who do not fit the proper mold be disciplined, tutored, coached, medicated, or **shunted off to special institutions [fired]** if they deviate from the “norm” established by these **authorities [managers]**.

A person visiting us from another planet could be excused for thinking that ours is a schizophrenic society, applying **diametrically opposed [the same]** principles to children and adults; and that it is a puzzling society indeed, which **expects [does not expect]** children trained to accept authority and conform to externally imposed demands to become, virtually overnight, adults who **think [do not think]** for themselves, question authority, and fight for the right to be free!

Much the same blatant contradiction between **schools [business organizations]** and the reality of the outside world applies to the issue of how to prepare children [adults] for the new millennium. What are the traits most useful in today's world? Foremost among them are flexibility, creativity, resilience, articulateness, and the ability to relate well to other people. When everything is constantly in flux, when every day brings new challenges, nothing is more important than the ability to adapt. When innovation — in whatever field or pursuit — is the most valued asset of a society, nothing is held in higher esteem than creativity. When risk is a feature of everyday life, nothing is more necessary to survival than the ability to rebound from failure, to pick oneself up and go on to pursue some other new path. When the entire world is within everyone's reach, nothing surpasses in effectiveness the ability to communicate one's ideas and feelings easily and clearly. When people all over the planet can and do relate directly to each other, nothing is more essential than skill in interpersonal interaction.

Knowing this, you would expect **schools [business organizations]**, to be a place where the unexpected and unplanned is the norm, where a set schedule and set **curriculum [workers/employees]** do not completely dominate the scene. You would expect schools **[business organizations]** to encourage **children [workers/employees]** to try out new ideas, new combinations, new ways of looking at the world rather than demand of them precise repetition of pre-determined and pre-digested matter. You would expect **schools [business organizations]**, to welcome failure, to live up to the maxim that people learn best from their own mistakes, rather than find ways to shame **children [workers/employees]** for failing and penalize **teachers [managers]** and administrators when **children [workers/employees]** fail. You would expect **schools [business organizations]** to allow **children [workers/employees]** to speak freely with each other and with **adults [managers]**, to mix freely with others of all ages, and to learn through daily experience how to develop the many subtle and complex ways of dealing with people of all types and backgrounds, rather than confine them to **age-segregated [position-segregated]** environments and enforce a discipline of silence worthy of a monastic order.

You would expect **schools [business organizations]** to do all this, not only because it is the appropriate way to prepare for the complexities of the new era we have entered, but because all this has been done successfully for decades in many **schools [business organizations]** throughout the world!

Topsy-turvy institutions can survive only so long before either collapsing, or causing the society they serve to collapse, as a result of their own internal contradictions. Thankfully, it is never too late to change course, the sooner the better!”

## **Conclusion**

This close correlation is not surprising. The developers of our educational model based it on one designed to create people fitted for C&C type organizations. It is no wonder adults raised in this kind of system accept the C&C world of business organizations. It is just what they have learned.

It also shows why the Extraordinary Organizations and SVS beliefs are so hard to bring into organizations and schools. A belief system so inculcated in people is very hard to displace.

However, as I have said before, it is only through changing these beliefs and living up to *America's ideals* that we can build organizations and schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

---

## **Until next time**

I want to thank Daniel for letting me use his piece. It adds to our understanding some of the ramifications of holding beliefs that do not fit the reality of children, adults, or the world . Next time I will return to the issue of becoming aware of and changing beliefs.

Be Well, and  
Be Extraordinary!

Don Yates  
Extraordinary Organizations

\* \* \*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS, INFORMATION, AND COMMENTS**

### **Comments and questions please**

Please let me have your questions and thoughts so I can include them in the letter. Just click on the email link in the Contact Information section below. Thanks

### **Forward this letter**

If you know someone you think would enjoy receiving this e-letter, please forward it. Just click on the Forward Email link at the bottom of this letter. You will receive a form on which you can add a personal note and the name and address of the recipient.

### **Receive notifications of future events**

You can now sign up to receive notices of future EO events. Click on the Update Your Profile link at the bottom of this letter. A form to indicate your choices will then pop up.

### **E-Letter archive**

If you would like to read PDF versions of published CEO E-Letters click on CEO Archives

\* \* \*

Privacy Policy: I never rent, trade or sell my E-mail list to anyone for any reason what so ever. You will never get an unsolicited E-mail from a stranger because you joined this list.

© 2004 Don Yates, All rights reserved. You are free to use material from this Creating Extraordinary Organizations E-letter in completely or in part. I would appreciate it if you would include with it this attribution:

By Don Yates of Extraordinary Organizations. Please visit EO's web site at [Http://Www.Extraordinaryorganizations.com](http://www.Extraordinaryorganizations.com) for more information and resources for Creating Extraordinary Organizations.