

Education, population, poverty, tax...getting views on topics like those in Jersey isn't the difficult part – but have you ever noticed how many people sound eminently credible when talking about them, even though they may actually be basing their views on conjecture, false facts and blind guesswork?

There is a real danger in making the 'facts' fit the opinion, rather than the other way around – which is exactly the point at which someone with an eye on the latest buzzwords will smugly insert the phrase 'post-truth' into the conversation, imagining its actually helpful.

So, we've asked the Jersey Policy Forum to add some robust material to those crucial local debates – the point is not to provoke agreement or acquiescence; it is to provide reliable material on which others can build their views.



Gailina Liew, Director, Jersey Policy Forum

How do we unleash Jersey's collective genius?

Imagine a grid of dots that is laid out in a square with 100 columns and 100 rows. How would you join the dots up? Is there a single 'correct' picture, or could many be drawn out of the almost infinite variations that are possible? What if each dot was a fact and you were tasked with coming up with policy recommendations that would address the issues that the grid of 10,000 facts (100 x 100) raised? What else would you need to know to complete the task? Could a single person complete the task? A group? What knowledge and experience is needed to do it? Is there room for boldness and creativity? This is how I see the public policy challenge and also the opportunity.

In a June 2014 Harvard Business Review

article on leadership and innovation entitled Collective Genius by L. A. Hill, G. Brandeau, E. Truelove and K. Lineback, looked at how the leaders of various technology companies have tackled the challenge of building a culture of innovation that results in economic success. Drawing on the research findings of Todd L. Pittinsky, a professor of technology and society at Stony Brook University, the authors assert that innovation is not just about fun and creativity but, in reality, "...is hard work and can be a very taxing, uncomfortable process, both emotionally and intellectually". Why is this necessary?

As the authors describe:

Innovation usually emerges when diverse people collaborate to generate a wide-

ranging portfolio of ideas, which they then refine and even evolve into new ideas through give-and-take and often heated debates. Thus collaboration should involve passionate disagreement. Yet the friction of clashing ideas may be hard to bear. It can create tension and stress – particularly in groups of talented, energetic individuals who may feel as if there are "too many cooks in the kitchen". Often organizations try to discourage or minimize differences, but that only stifles the free flow of ideas and rich discussion that innovation needs.

Today, a majority of Jersey's population were born in a place other than Jersey; let's call this group 'them'. If Jersey-born people are the 'us', how can we create a society that values both 'us' and 'them'? One clue might be to look at 'allophilic', otherwise described as positive and not just tolerant attitudes towards a group that is different from one's own group. Pittinsky's research showed that groups with higher allophilic were more likely to operate with 'open communication, feelings of inclusion, mentoring across genders and ethnicity, and bringing one's whole self to work.' This concept is further developed to clarify that for diversity to result in concrete innovation and economic benefits, the differences in perspectives in and amongst groups and sub-groups must be respected and valued, not assimilated. This allows 'slices of genius' to emerge and be aggregated into a 'collective genius.' How could this apply to Jersey?

Jersey is facing the challenges that many advanced economies share including technological disruption of established commercial models in its economic sectors, rapid population growth to sustain economic growth, ageing population demographic, risk of breakdown in social cohesion, declining productivity and increasing health, social care and pension burdens. It is unlikely that a single person or group will have all of the knowledge and experience to address these challenges. Indeed, many of these challenges are new and there are few precedents to provide a road map. There are opportunities for Jersey, as a small and largely

autonomous jurisdiction, to be innovative in addressing its public policy challenges and learn by doing - failing fast, tweaking and trying again - creating the evidence and precedents that other jurisdictions can look to but this would require a truly innovative mind-set. As the authors cited above note:

All too often, leaders and their groups solve problems through domination or compromise, resulting in less than inventive solutions. Innovation requires integrating ideas – combining option A and option B, even if they once seemed mutually exclusive – to create a new and better option.

How did the organizations that were studied create the right environment for innovation to flourish? The authors found that three elements needed to exist to create a willingness to innovate: a common purpose, shared values and rules of engagement. The common purpose is what motivates people to do the hard work and to endure the emotional and intellectual discomfort

in the rigorous and heated debates of integrative thinking. Four shared values were found to be common to all truly innovative organizations studied: bold ambition, responsibility to the community, collaboration and learning. The rules of engagement kept everyone focused on the task and discouraged unproductive behaviours. Two categories of rules were common: the first to guide how people work with each other (calling for mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual influence), and the second to guide how people think (for everyone to question everything, be data-driven, and see the whole). But willingness alone is not enough. Success in innovation also requires three capabilities: creative abrasion (generating ideas through discourse and debate for collaboration), creative agility (quick testing, reflection and tweaking for discovery-driven learning) and create resolution (making decisions to combine diverse and even conflicting ideas for integrative decision-making).

Can government rise to the challenge



of creating a culture of innovation? Can all of us living here, regardless of what role or position we normally occupy, find our common purpose and build the capabilities to address our public policy challenges together? Can we discover the 'slices of genius' in our children and other groups that have not generally had a voice in these debates? What can we do to unleash Jersey's 'collective genius'?

The Jersey Policy Forum is bringing people together to engage in challenging debate and discussion on a wide range of public policy issues. Please let us know if you are interested in joining the discussion and share your thoughts by email to contact@jerseypolicyforum.org.

Do you agree?

Please share your thoughts by email to contact@jerseypolicyforum.org. The Jersey Policy Forum is running a series of roundtable discussions to focus on understanding social and economic inclusion/exclusion in Jersey, education and population drivers and the development of a more comprehensive dashboard to assess how well Jersey is performing beyond GDP and GVA.