

The Unusual Mind

Manna Nosh transcript.
19 July 2009
Voices: Bob Manna, Matt Manna

Matt Manna: It's time for Manna Nosh.

From Dallas Texas this is Matt Manna welcoming you to this edition of Manna Nosh.

Today on the show, Bob Manna talks about the talent involved in understanding the basic meaning of something before it becomes obvious to others.

It's natural to accept as obvious that which we understand. But that does not mean that the analysis that reveals understanding is obvious, even if the subject being analyzed is in plain view to everyone.

This is what the English philosopher and mathematician; Alfred North Whitehead meant when he said, "Simple solutions seldom are. It takes a very unusual mind to undertake analysis of the obvious."

Analyzing the obvious is an absolute requirement however as today's show entitled Unusual Mind demonstrates.

Bob Manna: What is it about the obvious that eludes us and what is an unusual mind?

What identifies the unusual mind is that it has the ability to comprehend the basic and invariable meaning of something before it becomes apparent to others. Just ask yourself how often you or those around you, after learning of a successful new product or a problem solution, proclaimed, "Why didn't I think of that – it's obvious".

It makes one wonder why we don't do it more often considering the reward that such an undertaking generally provides.

The obvious gets overlooked because it usually lies outside our frame of interest. It's the classic dilemma that product planning and marketing research groups live with. If we work for a

widget factory our minds unwittingly constrain our research to the world of widgets. The fact is we make our money selling widgets so we concentrate on ways to sell them.

What makes a mind unusual is that first, it does not permit the data to drive the analysis. Stated differently, it does not permit a problem containing numbers to infer that arithmetic is the solution finding process. Second, it rejects boundaries, choosing rather to observe both that which lies within and that which lies outside a specific frame of interest.

Kleenex, a company selling facial tissue to women for removing makeup, began selling to men and women when observation of customer usage signaled to an unusual mind that Kleenex, was in reality, in the disposable handkerchief business.

Over the course of many years, wheels, a battery and other additions were introduced to make better grass clippers. Then in a blink of an eye, the unusual mind of a real estate salesman, not a grass clipper product planner, visualized the swirling brushes in a car wash as a better way to trim weeds.

It is this combination of discovery and being first to it that identifies unusual mind and makes it such a valuable asset.

For years the Scott's company was mired in third-place behind Dow Chemical and Sears Roebuck in the sale of seed and fertilizer to commercial farmers. No matter what was done to improve and promote the product, Scott's remained in third-place.

Scott's product was very good. In fact Scott's offered a 99.91% weed free seed. However, it cost more than the competition and Scott's was not able to convince farmers that fewer weeds was worth the higher price.

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The facts are a little sketchy, but supposedly, while waiting for a farmer to come in out of the fields, a Scott's representative noted that the semi-manual process in applying fertilizer was causing the farmer some difficulty. The rep noted the same situation on visits to other farms, including those that didn't use the Scott's product.

The rep convinced Scott's they should seek a solution to the application problem. They did. They purchased and promulgated the use of commercial seed and fertilizer spreaders. Whether or not they consciously knew it, in the eyes of the customer Scott's became redefined. In providing spreaders, Scott's, in the mind of its customer, became the spreader company and not just another seed and fertilizer company.

Agricultural operations have spreading needs other than seed and fertilizer. So when the question of spreading anything arose, Scott's got the call.

Today, Scott's is America's leading producer and marketer of not only grass seed and fertilizers but also herbicides and pesticide.

Next, Scott's introduced the first home lawn spreader. After all, every homeowner had the same-shared experience as farmers – difficulty in spreading seed. Today, with its Turf Builder and other high quality brands, Scott's owns just over half of the do-it-yourself lawn care market.

What was visible to all, the shared experience of the difficulty in spreading seed and fertilizer, was comprehended by only one unusual mind. But what a difference that one mind made for Scott's.

As Kleenex, Weed Eater, Scott's and many other success stories reveal to us, the evidence is overwhelming as to why we should develop an unusual mind: the ability to comprehend the basic and invariable meaning of something

before it becomes apparent to others.

This is Bob Manna. Thanks for listening.

Matt Manna: Well ladies and gentlemen that just about concludes this edition of Manna Nosh.

The program returns next time via the internet at www.mannanosh.com that's [www . m a n n a n o s h . com](http://www.mannanosh.com) were you can find show notes and transcripts of each and every Manna Nosh.

This program is also available as a free podcast via iTunes. You can find us in the iTunes store by searching for Manna Nosh.

You've heard from us and we'd love to hear from you our eMail address is comments@mannanosh.com

Manna Nosh is a production of Manna Groups Incorporated and is recorded and produced at the Manna Groups studio located in Dallas Texas.

This is Matt Manna saying thanks' for listening and we'll talk to you again next time right here on Manna Nosh.

