



BOEING
Center for Leadership & Learning
OffCenter
interview: **I. M. Sirius**
Unreal people at Boeing. 100% unfiltered.

Corporate pundit I.M. "Iggy" Sirius offers a new corporate paradigm to invigorate workforce engagement through the deployment of a chaos-embracing environment.

I.M. "Iggy" Sirius is a unique individual. It would be a gross understatement to offer him as simply a "gifted child." As a graduate of the Harvard Business School Master of Business Administration program at age 12, he has written a series of books and has been contracted as a consultant for many Fortune 500 companies looking to gain a fresh perspective from his postreconstructionist and prechaos theory corporate philosophy.

He recently completed a book about Boeing and deigned to spend time with us to explore his perceptions of this company.



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"Efficaciously challenged situations such as micromanagement stimulate creative insubordination."

OFF CENTER: First off, you're kind of young. Do you get any flak from that?

SIRIUS: Well, I certainly hope people are not summarily dissuaded by my youthful facade -- an MBA from Harvard is nothing to sneeze at. I'd like to think I've gleaned the collective experience of my professors and the Harvard Business School itself and can offer that in an evaluative and mutually beneficial discourse with business people. I continue to explore the benefits of synergistically chaotic paradigms as I consult with Fortune 500 companies. It's compelling work.

OFF CENTER: And lucrative?

SIRIUS: Duh!

OFF CENTER: Uh huh. Have you worked with any companies that have offered up a unique perspective?

SIRIUS: Nah. I pick the ones near amusement parks or fun stuff. Airplanes are cool, so here I am.

OFF CENTER: I see. Tell me, what is this postreconstructionist and prechaos theory you're espousing?

SIRIUS: In a nutshell, I'm convinced that randomly deployed frustration and inefficiency, whether from corporate bureaucracy or the sheer physics of how our universe operates, offers opportunistic situations to enhance personal growth while simultaneously engendering a more chaos-induced frustration-tolerant work environment.

OFF CENTER: So, chaos is good.

SIRIUS: Yeah, but not for all the reasons other pundits stare at waterfalls and pontificate that there's some natural ordering and structuring process to things -- there isn't. You work for a chaotic company in a chaotic industry in a chaotic world. There can be no natural order to building an airplane. You either impose order or embrace the chaos. Learn to love it, learn to learn from it. Exploit it for personal development and corporate improvement. Working together, in all its pontificacious glory and eloquence, is not about thriving; it's about surviving. It's about pushing through the impending doom chaos imposes upon you. It's about taming the ugly beast, whether that beast is the chaos itself or your systemic inadequacy in dealing with it. I don't buy this win-win situational dynamic. Win-win is a euphemism for "tie." With the continual onslaught of chaos, you face a lose-win, win-lose, or at least a tie-tie paradigm. Love it or dominate it. You see, there's really no difference. I don't differentiate between exasperating and exhilarating experiences.

OFF CENTER: Can you explain that a little more?

SIRIUS: Well, take, for example, some of the little annoyances that offer tremendous opportunities for continuous improvement. Like the short crosswalk times afforded by the traffic control lighting implements at the gates. Does anyone not realize this is simply a way to encourage short bursts of anaerobic activity to synergistically augment the aerobic activity of walking from the strategically designed single-tiered parking accommodations built far away from working environments in offices and plants? Sheer brilliance.

OFF CENTER: Uh, no. Hadn't really seen it that way. But, if it offers that kind of dramatic benefit, how come those same "upper managers" have reserved parking spots right up close to the buildings?

SIRIUS: They need to strike a balance between a perceived benefit that attracts new management aspirants, no matter how illusorily hollow that benefit is in reality, and their own personal well being.

OFF CENTER: So it's a sacrifice on their part.

SIRIUS: Certainly. But more germane is how Boeing, as a company, needs to synergistically evolve a dynamic work environment that encourages working with chaotic situations rather than through or over them. Learn to love the situational dynamics of a company that is changing, evolving, hurling.

OFF CENTER: Hurling?

SIRIUS: Well, yeah, you know, hurl. Puke, upchuck, toss your cookies. As part of the dynamic restructuring of any corporate paradigm, old systems necessarily attempt proactively to self-perpetuate and impose themselves on newer systems. Those antiquated and non-value-added paradigms need to be systemically purged as you leverage your new corporate infrastructure into an opportunity to actualize and *engage* your workforce associates and proactively integrate principle-centered intrapersonal dynamics synergistically into the contextual framework of an interactively collaborative culture-catalyzing force that will facilitate your emergence into a global business culture and foster initiative-based teaming.

OFF CENTER: You stressed the word "engage." What do you mean by that?

SIRIUS: It's part of a global corporate nomenclature revitalization effort that supplants the previously pervasive term "empower" with "engage." Dealing with chaos is largely about repositioning situational dynamics by exploiting language and the illusion of open communication.

OFF CENTER: Illusion?

SIRIUS: Precisely. The dynamics of open communication, both real and imagined, are inextricably linked to how efficaciously the group collectively manages and embraces chaos. As the frustration quotient level from chaos ascends, truly open communication and the free exchange of ideas and information can be deleterious to your coping mechanisms. So the illusion of open communication has to remain pervasive while attenuating that with sufficient spin control to afford adequate responsiveness and maintain the engagement of your work associates.

OFF CENTER: So people are, what, happy?

SIRIUS: Blissfully. Learning to love the chaos.

OFF CENTER: So how do we learn to love the chaos? What tools can we bring to bear on this?

SIRIUS: Creativity. As chaos by its very nature attempts to extricate various integrated elements from their collective whole, creativity fosters the introduction of a mucilaginous element to counteract the divisiveness of the chaos influence.

OFF CENTER: So you're saying that creativity is the glue that keeps chaos from pulling everything apart, but that chaos is the spark that motivates creativity.

SIRIUS: That might be a simplistic reiteration of my point, yes. Bingo-roony!

OFF CENTER: But in your book, in the chapter about how important metrics are, you stress that creativity has to be squeezed out of as many steps of a process as possible.

SIRIUS: Creativity in coping with systemic and bureaucratic stress is beneficial. For example, efficaciously challenged situations, such as micromanagement, stimulates creative insubordination. Another is how inefficient systems hone your creative coping mechanisms: they're like obstacle courses that keep your wits polished and your reflexes sharp. But, yes, you must be vigilant in extricating creativity from the specific work processes or at least minimizing it to small black box fragments of the metric process mapping exercise. You see, metrics are essential. They allow the illusion of consistent production rates and workflow and processes,

thereby facilitating production scheduling and delivery timelines. You change metrics, you visibly change production rates. Creativity is antithetical to numeric measurement of processes, especially in communication and production.

By critically evaluating every step of every process, you can reduce the number of steps that require creativity to a minimum, then stipulate those specific steps and where they will be allowed in the process. That way, when performing metric evaluations, you simply disregard those creative steps. I want to see how many e-mails per person per project, words per page or pages per hour, photos per trip, designed parts per week, number of management decisions per year, and so on. These are the critical benchmarks. Let people have their one or two percent creative steps, then move on to productive work measurements. It boils down to my extrapolation of the old axiom, "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it." That doesn't necessarily mean that if you *can* measure it you can manage it. We have to be satisfied with managing the measurement.

OFF CENTER: So, managing information rather than processes?

SIRIUS: No. Managing data. Information is one of our most important commodities. If you collect enough data, it looks like information. With enough data, you should be able to manage it sufficiently to actually protect the information it supports. Cool, huh?

OFF CENTER: You ever read Dilbert?

SIRIUS: Who?

OFF CENTER: Never mind. Thank you for your time.

Iggy's mother enters and wipes a smudge from his cheek over his whining objection. "Oh, just look at this! You have mustard smudges all over the book cover," she says. "We'll have to grab another one from the van. We have to go see that nice man over at Microsoft now, so let's get going." She thanks me for my "very gracious interaction" with her son, and I tell her she's welcome.

SIRIUS: I get to play the newest sim games, right? On a Pentium II 400 box? Running Win 98? That's the only reason I want to do my next book on them.

by Eric A. Paulsen

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