

Seeing the Future with SilverStone Group's Vision

by Virginia Collins, PhD & Gerald Wagner, PhD

In today's competitive workforce, employers want something new to create a dynamic incentive program for employees. However, some organizations may not have the slightest idea where to begin. Help is on the way—with Planners Vision!

Dr. Mitchel Resnick, from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Lab, has created a new model which he calls "the kindergarten approach to learning" (see figure 1). Dr. Resnick believes that by constantly designing, creating, experimenting and exploring, it is possible to develop one's ability to think more creatively. Just as young children learn by repetition, experimentation and play, Dr. Resnick believes that adults, too, can increase their creativity success rate by using that same process.

Dr. Gerald Wagner, of the Peter Kiewit Institute at the University of Nebraska, has expanded Dr. Resnick's kindergarten learning model and, in cooperation with SilverStone Group's Human Capital division, has developed Planners Lab Vision, a new software program with the capacity to quickly and easily create scenarios that help develop alternatives for benefits programs. This proprietary tool offers the following benefits for clients:

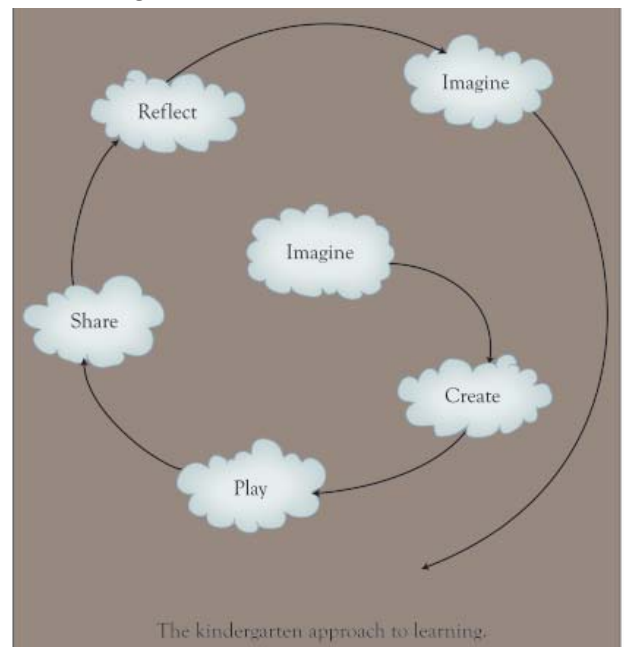
- Visualization capabilities with "real time" answers to "what if" questions (no more waiting for results while an analyst makes modifications to an Excel spreadsheet)
- The ability to describe assumptions using real-word equations instead of cell-based formulas. The user designs and creates models in English, using equations in the user's own vocabulary.
- Intuitive development and tracking that allows the user to look at words and know immediately what was included in the equation

Once the basic information is entered into the Planners Lab Vision program, the user moves to the "Playground" section of the software, creating "what if" scenarios and immediately seeing the impact each scenario would have on the organization. For example, "What impact would billing an additional 5 hours per week have on the profitability of the firm?" Or what impact would selling 750 extra units next year have on net rev-

enue and incentive pools?" With Planners Lab Vision, answers are generated immediately, allowing the user to get a head start on planning effective solutions.

Just as "play" suggests, if the user is not happy with the results, or would like to consider other – possibly more creative – strategies, it's easy to create additional "what if" scenarios. By imagining possibilities, users break out of the habit of linear thinking, using imagination as a tool to create real-life solutions. And as anyone who owns a business can tell you, people who have the best, most creative solutions win the customers.

Designing incentive strategies will continue to be an integral part of SilverStone Group's business practice. We have joined forces with Dr. Wagner to develop this powerful planning tool for our clients, and we are currently running pilot programs to determine the greatest value this technology will bring to our clients. We hope to identify the best utilization of Planners Lab Vision for our entire business practice, not only for incentive planning, but also for budgeting, strategic planning and compensation design.



Michel Resnick, "All I Really Need to Know (About Creative Thinking) I Learned (By Studying How Children Learn) in Kindergarten," Proceedings Creativity & Cognition Conference, 2007.