

## **Shrink Rap Radio #181, November 7, 2008. The Art of Engagement in Organizations**

**Dr. David Van Nuys, aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Jim Haudan**  
(transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio.com](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio.com) by Jo Kelly)

**Excerpt:** *“You know Aristotle said the soul never thinks without a picture; so we do believe that when it comes to people having sort of their central processing unit in their head and in their heart, that somehow more often than not they create a picture of the world around them or around us, and then how we fit into it. But I think when it comes to multiple people, what we are looking at is that if a picture is worth a thousand words, then a metaphor can be worth a thousand pictures. And what that means, is that when it comes to having people really understand business systems, or organizational systems, which are true – and any time people come together – the ability to visualize that creates a common mental practice field or a brain gym, so people don’t spend all the time trying to interpret it, they can spend all their time together figuring how we are going to improve it.”*

**Introduction:** That was the voice of my guest Jim Haudan, CEO of Root Learning and author of the 2008 book, *The Art of Engagement: Bridging The Gap Between People and Possibilities*.

<http://www.rootsofengagement.com/>

For the past 20 years, he has not only built a thriving business, but has helped numerous individuals unleash their hidden potential. With origins as a coach and school administrator, it’s easy to see what led him to co-found a company dedicated to business learning. His innovative, creative methods draw people into a business by tapping into basic human curiosity and intelligence. By fully engaging people in their work, they become ready, willing and able to deliver on company strategies, producing real results.

Root Learning has made the list of the Best Small and Medium Companies to work for in America for four straight years – obviously, Mr. Haudan is on to something. Jim is also a frequent speaker on a variety of topics and has contributed to several business publications. When not travelling the globe to visit clients, he enjoys relaxing with his family at their lake cottage, playing golf, and going to Jimmy Buffett concerts.

**Dr. Dave:** Jim Haudan, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

**Haudan:** Thank you David, it's a pleasure to be with you today.

**Dr. Dave:** I want to talk to you about your book, your 2008 book which is titled *The Art of Engagement – Bridging the Gap Between People and Possibilities*. And I'm eager to explore all the implications of that title, but let's start out with having you share something about your background. How did you get into all this?

**Haudan:** Well I actually have somewhat of an eclectic background. I have been an educator with advanced business degrees, so I think the answer is, that many of the things that I have found that have been successful in my life, have been putting uncommon things together to create a breakthrough perspective. We have artists and MBAs here, and I think it's kind of a fascinating approach to really create sort of this breakthrough and in this case in the noise in many business organizations where people are not fully engaged.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, well it's interesting that you have a background in education; maybe that's why I related to you and your book so well, since I also have a background in education. And even though you are in the world of business, your book is very psychological, and I think the thing that grabbed my attention most about that title is the word "engagement"; because I've been following the emerging field known as positive psychology – I don't know if you're familiar with it – but the word "engagement", both with one's pursuits, and with others seems to be a key component of what's called "the good life". So tell us what you mean by engagement.

**Haudan:** Well I think – and maybe this is a long answer – but in many cases your comment about the pursuit of the good life, I think it's just being totally aware, in the sense of being totally revved up and in gear with your pursuits and your endeavors. And I think the big challenge is that if you look at a lot of people and their lives, there are many places where that just happens naturally.

I'm fond of saying in the book that I'm a Jimmy Buffett fan, and a sports fan, and I can't imagine going to a Jimmy Buffett concert and being asked as I go through the gate to put on my engagement glasses; or if I go to a World Series game, given the World Series is going on right now, that we have to be reminded as we go in to be engaged. Yet that natural engagement in many areas of our lives does not easily translate or transfer into our business

lives where we spend 40 to 50% of our waking hours. And to me there is a huge opportunity there to ask why; and then to begin to find a better way.

**Dr. Dave:** Well why is engagement important in the business environment?

**Haudan:** You know I think what ends up happening is, that anything that's successful in life I think is so because people provide the best of themselves. Whether that's in an individual endeavor or a joint endeavor, it's how you combine the best talents, and skills, and strengths of people into a unified effort that really makes a difference. I think as I mentioned that happens not only in the sporting and entertainment events I talked about, but it happens at Cub Scout bake sales, at all kinds of parent activities, it's happening everywhere; it's just not happening in the work life. And yet I think the toll on businesses and organizations is huge. By last count, just disengagement in the US cost the US economy over four hundred billion.

But I think there's probably even a bigger issue, and that is I think if you really wonder or ask people what they're really most fearful of, I think that fear is that they just go through their life and don't really realise how what they do makes a difference; and I think engagement can change that.

So the essence of it is that we can not only engage people to get better results in our organizations, but I think the sense of meaning and purpose that comes from being part of something bigger than yourself is equally, and in some cases more, important.

**Dr. Dave:** You know when you talk about engagement in this way, it makes me think of jobs that I've had – you know before I got my degree and went on to my career – and there were jobs that I had, and I'm sure everybody can relate to this experience, of some jobs that we've had where we're watching the clock, and it's not a high engagement job and time just crawls. Other situations such as the work that I do now for example, creating these podcasts, and also my market research consulting, there's just not enough time in the day. So that's really a big difference I think, in terms of the impact of engagement, is just your whole sense of time and excitement.

**Haudan:** I think so Dave; you know I think everybody has to work, but not everybody has to provide the discretionary effort that really touches their passion, touches their beliefs, touches their sense as I mentioned before of purpose. And I think when we do that, as you suggest not only does time go past fast, but it just becomes something that is much more enjoyable, and that it really becomes more productive.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. Now you tell a story in your book; in the first chapter you tell a hot dog story that I love. Would you mind retelling it here?

**Haudan:** Sure. You know I think the whole premise of the hot dog story was built out of personal experiences; but you know I'm from Ohio, and I'm also a sports fan, so in Ohio there is a team called the Cleveland Indians, and the Cleveland Indians are a baseball team that I grew up being a tremendous fan of. The only dilemma was that they were just awful; and they were awful most years. So as the season started you had just the beginning of the season where you still had hope, but pretty quickly gave way to just despair because they weren't going to be any good again this year. As a matter of fact, they were so bad that Hollywood made two movies about the Indians – and they were spoof movies – it was called Major League 1, and Major League 2, where it was the team that really couldn't accomplish anything.

So the problem was, not only did I have this life of being a fan of the Cleveland Indians, but I sort of infected my children with the same disease, so they were also Indian fans; and I was never admired as picking a winner every year because again one or two months into the season we were waiting for the next year.

But finally in 1995 they made it to the World Series for the first time in 40 years. So if you can imagine just the excitement not only that I had but my children had, in that for the first time in their lifetimes, and mine at that point, they were going to be in a championship game. So we were not only going to the game, we were the first ones in the gate. So we were there that night, and it was a night game and it was surreal if you can imagine – some of these events just become absolutely almost fantasy-like in terms of the energy, and the excitement, and the anticipation. And everybody in the stadium felt like they were brothers and sisters, and being more polite than ever, and high fiving and we made our way to our seats. Just about the time when the game was just going to start, I also had two gentlemen with me from Mercedes that we had been working with, and just before that first pitch of the first game

**Dr. Dave:** They were from Germany, right?

**Haudan:** They were from Germany, correct; and so it was just before that first pitch, and that first game in the World Series for the Indians in 40 years, they asked me if I could go get them some hot dogs. And I said, "Excuse me? Don't you realise this is the first time this team has been in this championship in 40 years. It is absolutely a moment of great energy and thrill; I have my children here. I really don't care how much money you

spend with us but I'm not going to go get you any hot dogs. Sit down, and relax, and watch the game."

Probably about the third inning a friend of mine leaned over and said "I now really understand what you guys do." And I said, 'What do you mean'. He said, "Not only do I understand what you do, but I understand what you are passionate about." He said "It just all hit me. You know at the start of this game there were 42,000 people in this stadium that really understood the game. There was no need to explain it to them, they absolutely understood the dynamics of it, how it's played, they understood what was critical for success, and they were absolutely waiting for that first pitch; and two didn't have a clue and they wanted to get a hot dog."

He said "At the same point there were 41,998 that understood how to keep score; they understood what were the efforts and activities necessary to create score, and what were the ones to prevent score. And the same 41,998 understood the strategy, which at this point were the line ups for each team to get put on home plate before the first pitch – was not something that was just static, and you would check in a year later how it evolved – it was something that after the first pitch all 41,998 people were talking about the "what ifs": what if this happens, what should we do; if that happens, what should we do; what if this goes this way – how do we respond. And they were absolutely captivated by the drama of this potential game; and absolutely there were 2 who didn't have a clue."

And he said "In most companies we have 42,000 people. 41,998 who do not understand the game; do not understand how it's played, do not understand how competition is changing, do not understand how competitors are emerging, do not understand the essential value that we are trying to deliver; they do not understand the villains and the heroes in that whole process. And by the way there's more drama in our businesses and our organizations than there is in the sitcom *Desperate Housewives* but we just haven't found a way to really bring that to life."

"The second thing is they really don't understand how we are going to keep score. In the business case: where the money comes from and where it goes and how they can add more coming in, and how they can keep more from going out, and how all that money is part of the circulatory system that continues this body to move forward." And he said, "And finally, most people 41,998 people in the organization think that the strategy is something that we give them, and that they ought to just go try it, and it's just absolutely static; and only the two remaining people in the organization really understand how dynamic it is."

And I think the reality is that it is absolutely a call to action that if we can in our recreational lives find 41,998 people that understand the game, understand how to keep score, and understand the strategy is a starting point not an end point, and that they play a critical role in responding to the evolution of that, that it is something that can happen in business.

As a matter of fact, just to take it a step further: I mentioned that the absence of engagement in business has cost the US economy 400 billion dollars last year. There is another 10 billion that the US economy was short changed on because of all the people playing fantasy football and fantasy baseball in the US. And what that means is that there are people from four to ninety-four that set up teams, that they choose players, that they play in a game, that they get the results, that they modify their team, they modify their players, they go back and play again and they are constantly in the game.

Just to show you the irony of all this: before the season was over, my dad is eighty-two and I went over to his house to watch the Indians game and unfortunately he had the Yankees game on. And he had it on, and I said why are you watching the Yankees, we are Indians fans; and he said “I have a fantasy player on the Yankees”. I said, I can’t believe it – turn the Indians game on, this is what I really wanted to watch.

But the point being, we are so capable of understanding a game, of understanding the score, at taking corrective actions, at enriching our lives in the spirit of competition, the challenge, the sense of achievement; yet we have not been able to do that in many of the places where we work, and spend the majority of our time day in and day out, and week in and week out.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes; I love the way your friend commenting on the hot dog event kind of turned the numbers upside down; because at the baseball game the great bulk of people were engaged, and there were two guys who were kind of out of it and didn’t know the score, didn’t know what was going on. Whereas in most organizations it’s the other way around: there are just a few guys at the top who have the big picture, the big vision, and the rest of the people are kind of blind because they are not engaged.

Let me have you tell another story that maybe builds on the same thing. It’s the story in Chapter 2 about the three bricklayers.

**Haudan:** I think this one David is an interesting one, and the story goes: a child goes up to a building site and asks a bricklayer what he is doing, and

he rather perfunctorily says, “Can’t you see what I’m doing? I’m laying bricks”. So his vision is very tactical in the sense of what he is doing is clearly a job. The story goes: he goes up to another gentleman who is also laying bricks and asks this gentleman what he is doing, and it is beyond a job, and his response is, “I am building a wall”. So the child looks at what he is accomplishing and what he is doing. Finally he goes up to a third bricklayer, and he asks the gentleman what he is doing, and his response is, “I am building a cathedral that will house many people for years, and allow them to worship together, and allow them to come together to create great deeds”.

And so I think the real question is: how do we really create a sense of what we are about, in a way that allows people to truly see the outcome of what their work and effort is. It’s interesting David, because I think the real question is: whose responsibility is that?

I’m going to launch into one quick story on that issue: because I can remember being with a teacher back to my education days. I remember asking the teacher how she decided what to teach. And she said, “well I teach according to the minimum standards – I don’t have a lot of flexibility”. And I pushed her further: I said no really, how do you decide what to teach? And she said, “well I teach to the minimum standards”. I said no: you are in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, how do you decide what to teach? And she said, “well I have to teach what is after 4<sup>th</sup> Grade and before 6<sup>th</sup> Grade”. And finally the fourth time I pushed her: I said, I understand all that – how do you decide what to teach? And she said, “well I teach what I like”. And I said rather simply: what if what you teach is not what your students like?

And the whole answer to the question was really whose responsibility is it to bring relevance to that classroom? And the same question is to that bricklayers’ building site, or to our organizations where people work: whose responsibility is it to bring relevance? We absolutely believe that the manager and the leader has a unique opportunity to translate the stories of a business into something that is relevant to their people. But the starting point of that, almost in the spirit of employees as customers, is with the individual; and not with – as the teacher said – “what I like”.

**Dr. Dave:** OK, these are great stories, and they seem to stress the importance of everyone in the organization having the big picture, and that is where the meaning comes from. Are there any companies that come to mind that have been particularly successful at doing what you are describing?

**Haudan:** Yes, I think so. We have the Hilton brand in Hampton, is very good at that. I think one of the things that is a challenge in any organization where you have a franchisor and franchisee – which is a little different flavor of what we have been talking about – is that you can go to your respective corners, and have different polarized point of views. The franchisor is trying to have a consistent brand experience for customers, and the franchisee maybe trying to maximize their investment in the four or five hotels that they own.

But the real question becomes: how do we come to a big picture about this business that we really align on, and can co-drive to the success of the business. And Hampton Hotels has been one of the shining lights in the hospitality industry; and by looking at the big picture of the travelling customer's needs, and how those can be met, and how both the franchisor and franchisee can respond to those – I think is one example where the ability to look at the big picture together has really helped those two key players in the Hampton brand to come together, and really perform admirably and really have just an outstanding experience for many of their guests.

I think another example would be Harley Davidson. Over the years Harley Davidson has had ups and downs, but one of the things that Harley has been very clear on is trying to take their business to their people. So in the baseball story example: to make sure that they understand the big picture, to make sure they understand the economic system; and quite frankly to also make sure they understand what customers value the most, and how we can get it to them. I think they have been over the years very successful at that.

There are a number of companies that I think have really caught on to this concept of the big picture; and part of the reason for that David, is because that can be a very fast language for organizations that are really trying to get people to see the business as a system, not unlike baseball as a system.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, and you say a fast language: we know that things are moving very fast these days. And I want to underscore at one point you use the word “organizations”: I want all my listeners, even if they are not involved in some kind of big corporate business, we are all in organizations of one sort or another, whether it is clubs or small business, or parent teacher organizations, and I think a lot of the things you are saying – if not all of them – apply to all sorts of organizations in our lives.

There is a place where you outline four points that I think really are very important psychological points that I agree with, and for which I think there is a lot of scientific support. The points I am referring to are:

- 1) people want to be part of something big – that makes a lot of sense to me.
- 2) people want to feel a sense of belonging.
- 3) people want to go on a meaningful journey.
- 4) people want to know that their contributions make a significant impact on the journey.

**Haudan:** Yes, I think David those are absolutely correct; and if I could just touch on those really quickly.

This issue of being part of something big: when we ask people what really engages them, they tell us it is part of something big and they can even extend that further and say “being part of something bigger than myself”. I think people are generally willing to endure personal sacrifice if they can be part of creating something that doesn’t exist, and if that can be something worthwhile, and meaningful and something bigger than just themselves, that becomes captivating, it becomes compelling.

One of the unfortunate pieces of it, it goes right back to the bricklayers: in many of our organizations it is not compelling to just lay a brick. You almost have to say, what is compelling about that? It might be a little more compelling to build a wall. But I can’t imagine anything more compelling than to think that you have a legacy that you have built an environment where tens and hundreds of people will come together to unify and to create meaningful impact in the world around them, in the sense of a cathedral. And I think that is where we are missing it. We really stop short of recognising that there is a huge value if we can translate what we are doing in our organizations into something bigger than themselves that makes sense.

The belonging one is interesting. What I think happens is, that we are in times of unprecedented change; and the unfortunate fear, uncertainty and doubt which comes up for a lot of people in times of unprecedented change kind of knocks this sense of do I really belong here? And nothing will cause people to disengage more than feel that it is no longer their team: because they can’t perform, or they are not valued, or they can’t make the cut. So I think all of those things are real human emotions that we have to suggest where we want to go in many of our organizations that we have never been before, so we are going to have to build the bridge as we walk on it. But it is

important to extend that emotionally to people, so that they know that the organization is behind them, and that they are a part of it.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Haudan:** Then the third one is this purposeful adventure. It is that sense of the exciting challenge that is really worthwhile; and many organizations we have strategies – my gosh, I think we could take any organization’s strategy and turn it into a video game – and we actually are doing this – and probably get a lot of people to play it. The problem is they get locked in the caves and closets of organizations so people don’t see it as a challenge, they just see it as a brick again; and we lose the opportunity to just have this sense of excitement that comes from accomplishment.

The final one: this whole belief and importance that you can see what you do matters in the lives of other human beings. I was in Europe last week talking about the book, and I had a rather unique experience. There was a very large pharmaceutical company there, and a gentleman came up to me afterwards and said, “I just want to tell you a little story”. He said, “I have been doing leadership development in our company for the last fifteen years. So we have taken every leader in this organization and put them through all these different courses and with all due respect, much of it has been just compliance based so that people could get their ticket punched”. He said, “I want to tell you the last one we did, we tried something a little different: so we brought in four hundred leaders and we put them in tables of ten – so there were forty tables – and the teamwork activity was to have each of them build a bicycle”. And he said, “to be honest with you, that wasn’t all that different: they built a bicycle, and some struggled, and some did fine, some were faster, some were slower, fights broke out, collaboration ensued and all that. It accomplished all that we had hoped to accomplish from that standpoint”. And he said, “but the part that we didn’t tell people was that there were a bunch of disadvantaged kids in the lobby: and for every table there was a child that had a number for that table, that would receive that bicycle”. And he said, “When the session was over, they opened the doors, and these kids came in; and the tables got to meet the kids, and get to see this bicycle they just built and who it went to, and understand the difference it made in that child’s life”. He said, “In all these years, I receive more comments from just that one activity than I have in everything else we have ever done”. And he said, “This whole idea, regardless of where you are in an organization, that you can see how what your work does impacts the lives of another person, cannot be underestimated”.

It was just by coincidence that he told that story, but I think we forget – I don't care how much money you make, I don't care how many accolades you have, and I don't care how successful you've been – I don't think we can ever diminish the need to really continue to identify with the fact that what we do matters, and especially if it matters to other people.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, amen. Now you talked about disengagement, which is the opposite of engagement; and you talk about something you call “the disengagement canyon”. I don't know if we have already covered that, or if there is a little bit more you want to say about that?

**Haudan:** No, I think one of the great challenges is that in the book there is a picture of this canyon. We drew the canyon in 1992 and we thought we would probably put it away by 1993. Unfortunately, or fortunately it has picked up speed every year since, and many organizations say, “Can you put our name on that?”

And what it really shows are these canyons between the leaders of an organization that can see what needs to be done, but don't have their hands on the levers of change every day; the managers that are the poor souls that are stuck somewhere between the leaders – so they have to receive what they say – and then the doers so they have to send to them something to do and they are many times clueless; and then the doers that have their hands on change every day but can't see what needs to be done. So what you find, and maybe even metaphorically, is that everybody is at a different altitude, and everybody sees the problems that we face very differently. So we are very fond of asking organizations to look at this picture which is in the book, and say why don't they, all players – leaders, managers and doers – see the same thing, and what happens if they don't.

And I do think this ties back to two things. One: the canyon is a natural state – I think as long as the external environment changes it creates changes and gaps between people at the different levels of the organization. But the second one is: how important it is to create a common line of sight, or a common language that cuts across all these altitudes so that everybody can see the same thing and understand the same thing.

You know we have this wonderful saying, that is: “people will tolerate the conclusions of their leaders but they will act on their own”; and the reason it is so wonderful is because we have never found it not to be true. But if you are going to change the dynamic of that, which means that everybody is in a different corner, and that our conclusions are similar, then what we see in terms of our businesses must be explored equally. So everybody: leaders,

managers, and individuals must be able to see all the drama in our business; and given the decency to compare and contrast, to check and recheck, to unlearn and to relearn; and when they are given that opportunity 99.9% of people come to very similar conclusions.

The problem is what each of us see is so different, our conclusions are so different, that again these canyons get perpetuated.

**Dr. Dave:** Well it's interesting how you approach this in your consulting work. I have interviewed other people who do organizational consulting of one sort or another. The thing that really leaps out at me as I look at your book, that seems to distinguish your approach, is your emphasis on both images and stories.

Why are these important, and give us an example about how you use these in your consulting to an organization?

**Haudan:** Sure. I heard this, but I've never found it, so don't quote my quoting of it, but I think Steven Spielberg according to my recollection said, "the only two things unique to human history are stories and games". Now whether he said that or not, I find there to be a tremendous amount of truth in that, and I also believe there is a tremendous amount of opportunity. So basically when we look at pictures or images, and especially when we look at visualizing stories which again are metaphors, I think there is a couple of interesting reflections.

The first is, you know Aristotle said the soul never thinks without a picture; so we do believe that when it comes to people having sort of their central processing unit in their head and in their heart, that somehow more often than not they create a picture of the world around them or around us, and then how we fit into it. But I think when it comes to multiple people, what we are looking at is that if a picture is worth a thousand words, then a metaphor can be worth a thousand pictures. And what that means, is that when it comes to having people really understand business systems, or organizational systems, which are true – and any time people come together -the ability to visualize that creates a common mental practice field or a brain gym, so people don't spend all the time trying to interpret it, they can spend all their time together figuring how we are going to improve it.

Now let me give you one quick example here, because we do this often and why visualization can be so important. But if we had a room of 30 people right now, and I said OK I'm going to say a word and I want you to just tell

me what you think, and so the word is “bear”. And so David, I’m just going to ask you: when I say “bear” what do you think?

**Dr. Dave:** Ah, a big black grizzly bear.

**Haudan:** OK a big black grizzly. Then I am going to go around the table right now and just pretend people are here: and so the next person would say “market”; the next person would say “trap”; the next person would say “Chicago”; the next person would say “naked”; the next person would say “feet”; the next person would say “polar”; the next person would say “koala”; the next person would say “aspirin”; the next person would say “panda”; and the last person would say “Teddy”. And I would say OK gang, it’s time to go: let’s go execute that son of a gun.

And they would all at that moment just have this “aha!”, where that is exactly what happens in many organizations. That is, this huge gap between what we say, and what we mean; and if we can’t mean the same thing that our efforts are often in conflict with each other, rather than in unison.

The true story is: I was at a 30 billion dollar company trying to visualize their strategy with them, and the chairman couldn’t contain his excitement and he said, “That’s perfect! That’s exactly it”. Then I saw the frown on the vice-chairman’s face and he looked over and he said to the chairman, “Is that the way you see it?” and he said “Yes. I can’t believe we didn’t do this sooner”. And he said, “Then we had better talk because that is not what I thought you meant, and that is not what I have been doing”.

And when you consider the resources of a 30 billion dollar company and the time and effort of the top two people that have gone towards trying to create the direction of that organization and then enlisting the support of all their people; that their meanings were not exactly the same, you just have to pause and say “Wow”.

Then if you can come back and say, now wait a minute, if visualization has the ability to ferret out interpretations and then lock on shared meanings, maybe this could become a powerful language that could be consistent with shared meaning across cultures, and morays and experiences so that people can really – back to my comment about belong – see how they belong and what we are trying to accomplish in this organization. And not be whipsawed by every week a different interpretation of that, that creates frustration and ultimately disengagement.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, as in your example with the bear, if we all have a different image in our minds and we are all going to go racing off in different directions. So what you do, actually concretely in your consulting work, is it looks like you have a whole staff of artists: and that you actually bring them into the discussion, and in a collaborative fashion with the group that you are working with, you begin to have that artist create pictures and maps of the organizational system that everybody

**Haudan:** Yes we do, and again it is an attempt to use visualization and data and dialogue to draw out the opinions and attitudes, conclusions and beliefs of people, so that they can be put on the table and merged into a common mental model that has shared meaning.

The other thing that is interesting David, is that it is absolutely electric. I don't know how many of your listeners have ever been at a lounge, or a bar, or at a restaurant where they picked up a napkin or a cocktail napkin, and tried to convey something to someone next to them. And then they asked a few questions, that person did and they changed it and they kept iterating it on this cocktail napkin; well I don't know but most people tell me that doesn't feel like work – that feels like creation and it feels like something that is being built. So that is literally this concept of visual iteration, and the reason that is so fascinating from a psychological standpoint: in most organization teams, whether it is in a senior team or a small team in a division, or just a work team – there are people with ego. Inevitably people have different ideas about how we should do things, and what we find more often than not, they vie for their ideas to win, and so sometimes that happens under the table, sometimes that happens on the table but there are clearly people that feel like there are winners and losers.

If you use visual iteration, not unlike a napkin sketch, as a group process where everybody's points and opinions count, and you continue to draw them out both figuratively and literally, and create a common picture, it's amazing because two or three things happen. The first thing is the egos just sort of disappear, and the childlike spirit of discovery reappears. The second thing that happens is that when we ask whose picture it is, everybody claims it's theirs, so the ownership becomes broad and rampant. And then the final thing: absolutely every time as people step back and look at it, they realize that what they've created was never something that could have been created by one of them by themselves; but it was the magic of the iteration and collaboration and conversation between people that created something unique and special. Which somewhat sets them on fire – because they feel like now they've got a clear idea of what they need to go do together – more excitement about the fact that it's theirs, and quite frankly the ability to bring

others into it in a way that they can share that excitement and convey the meaning.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow, this is so exciting to me. I have some background myself in organization consulting and development, and meeting facilitation and so on. It really moves things up a notch. I've seen a lot of techniques that try to move towards the kind of experience that you've just described, and some with more success than with others. But this just makes so much sense to me, the way that you bring in the visualization and the story telling.

I'm afraid that we are running out of time here. Jim, as we wrap up is there any last thing that you would like to leave our audience with?

**Haudan:** Well I just think that the big opportunity is that in the US 70% of our folks are disengaged, and I don't think that it's by choice. I think a lot of our environments have created a sense of fear, and I think it does not have to be that way. If we can tap into that dormant capability of our people we can get a lot better business results. But the way to do that is to remember that human beings work here, and to look around the places they are absolutely ecstatic in their engagement, and see how can we steal some of those and bring it to the workplace so that their sense of accomplishment is equally high where they spend 40 to 50% of their waking hours. I think that is a noble cause.

**Dr. Dave:** Well I tell you, I think if I were a young guy I would be knocking on your door looking for a job to figure out how I could work with your group.

Jim Haudan – thanks so much for being my guest on Shrink Rap Radio.

**Haudan:** It's been a pleasure David, thank you.