



Weekly Intelligence Notes

Short-form Book Review

(March 2025)

Creating Mission Impact: Essential Tradecraft for Innovators at CIA and Beyond

by Joe Keogh, Joe Ball, Greg Moore
Amazon Books
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Review by **John Driscoll***
Former CIA Executive,
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As mentors on the topic of marketing new ideas into a hierarchical and doctrinally driven organization, the authors are unimpeachable. Collectively, they bring almost a century of experience in intelligence operations that they have applied to teaching methods of promoting change and new thinking. This skill is sorely needed in the Intelligence Community (among others), making this book a worthy read.

The 9-11 Commission Report observed “four failures” that contributed to the deadly attacks on that day. “Failure of Imagination” was paramount among them, and all intelligence organizations still struggle with that today. “Bureaucracies are not known for fostering imagination,” states the 9-11 Commission Report. The observation is so understated as to be almost comical, were it not for its consequences. This book, comprising eight chapters, provides a roadmap for the intrepid officer who cares more about his country than about himself and is willing to make the effort to challenge “the way we do things.”



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In the 1960s, Dr. George Land did landmark work on creativity for NASA in an effort to identify the most creative people for the Apollo Program. They were needed for the most challenging problems. Dr. Land developed a successful test for creativity. NASA applied it and that put America on the moon in 1969. Dr. Land did not stop there: he tested five-year-olds, ten-year-olds, fifteen-year-olds, and adults with the same test. His findings were stunning. Among the five-

year-olds, 98% scored in the “genius” range of creativity. By age 10, the percentage dropped to 30% and, by age 15, it sank to 15%. For adults, the rate was 2%. The results seem to indicate that we are all born creative and with imagination, but it is systematically driven out of us.

My 30-plus-year career saw many creative, innovative ideas and efforts fail. Good ideas, whose time was right, had the necessary funding, and were led with commitment, but could not produce the change they desired. The authors identify many of the conventional roadblocks that are encountered, offer sound advice and ideas to navigate them, and provide excellent examples of past events that illustrate the concepts.

Chapters two and four are particularly illuminating. They focus on capturing attention for your ideas — how to brief them successfully — and the barriers to innovation. Each chapter offers specific and practical advice in these areas and offer much to think about. Officers at all levels would benefit from an examination of the tips offered in these two chapters.

The authors have done yeoman research in the area as well. Excellent examples accompany each chapter. They also explore the intellectual underpinnings of innovation, resistance to change and emotional intelligence as a barrier to innovation. The combination of theory, example, and practical tips make the book a worthy read — not just for intelligence officers, but for anyone trying to produce needed organizational change.

If there is a criticism, it is that the book is long overdue.

John Driscoll is a former CIA Executive who has developed short-duration, high-impact leadership development programs for CIA, FBI, DEA, ICE, CBP, ODNI, the US Departments of State and Treasury, and the US Air Force. During his three-decade career at CIA, in addition to serving in command positions domestically and overseas, he also established the first Directorate of Operations unit to focus on talent management and career development in ways more commonly seen in top-tier private sector corporations, the US military, and other agencies of the Intelligence Community that were more evolved in these areas.