

# The Alternative Line

by Joe Holzer for Publication in CNY-PCA Redline Report Copyright 2009 <http://www.holzerent.com>

## Creativity and Genius

Most people who can afford Porsches are creative. Sadly, but unrecognized, most people who can't are as well. Genius is a label assigned by the masses to people who are often completely misunderstood by those masses. But the differences between "scientist" and "mad scientist" are fine indeed, and more often than not hinge simply on how far ahead of their time they are thinking.

For example, Ferdinand Porsche's Lohner-Porsche was a hybrid almost a hundred years before the first Prius. But thirty years before that, anyone suggesting even a motorized car for the individual would have been put into a rubber-wall room, locked from the other side. I was reminded of that watching the History Channel's story of Tesla. No, not the electric sports car sensation. Its namesake, without whom the 20<sup>th</sup> century would pretty much look like the 18<sup>th</sup>. It also brought back the line from the "Charlie Wilson's War" CIA field guy when he said "...we'll see".

Context is the key to all creativity and genius. Few people would doubt that Paul McCartney has both. But would he have been regarded so in, say, the dark ages? Probably not. But that is the point; the reason most of you know of Albert Einstein and John Lennon while few besides you august readers know of me is simply because the time was more right for their ideas than for many of mine. But mine have been no less creative. Think of the celebrities who are much imitated by other not-yet celebrities, and only a very few of those ever become real celebrities in their own right. Why the real ones have done so is less important than those who pan them, though. Because whatever made the real ones "make it" was mostly fluke. But recognizing that uniqueness, and then trying to emulate it, is actually VERY creative. And doing so well is in many ways a LOT more difficult than being fresh. It is like trying to put a round peg into a square hole whose max cross section is identical.

What has that to do with you? Well, first you need to recognize that nobody gets a real clean slate. Whatever we hope, and I am pretty sure most of us do hope, President Obama can do, the situation he has is largely the result of his predecessor, just as the Clinton years were a relative high point, but could be said to be so because of the problems dealt with by Reagan. And Bush started with the Clinton fallout. And Bush One. Now we seem to be repeating the Hoover – Roosevelt model. But we also know things today we didn't then. So today we have creative thinking, albeit very different, as a response to the same situation from 1929. Again; "...we'll see".

Now that you are starting to look for the birdcage to line it with this, take a moment to look around. If your life has been unchanged in the past year you either had nothing to begin with (and few readers of this are likely to match that description), or you have somehow dodged a bullet everybody else has been hit by. But now we get to the meat of this; your creativity in dealing with it.

There will be many who are simply devastated. As a mental health survivor (so far at least) I urge you to seek help. But I also can cynically tell you both that: a) Your Insurance company couldn't care less about your mental health, and will actively try to get around Timothy's Law, and b) Because of a) your choices in that help will be limited. So get creative, and demonstrate your genius. That simple act may prove to be precisely the catharsis you need, as it was for me.

True genius is really the act of avoiding the common mistake of discarding possibilities which are based on past practice. To those for whom "we tried that and it didn't work" or "it will never work" are preconceptions, I freely admit that you are almost certainly right. For you. Those who believe they will fail will be certain to achieve their belief. But there is an old saying: "Those who 'can't' are always overcome by those who 'must'". So is genius truly unique, or merely evidence of thinking differently than the masses? I believe the latter. And the more audacious the better. Think about it; throughout its history, Porsche was dwarfed by their sometimes customer, VW. Porsche ideas were frequently stillborn when the whims of the larger partner suddenly changed, ala the 912, 914, 924, Cayenne (engines), and a host of other examples. Yet nobody, including Ferry Porsche's cousin Ferdinand, ever dreamed that David would swallow Goliath. Especially hedge fund managers. Despite the fact that their money in large part was responsible for it.

When Wendelin Weideking dreamed up the idea of a Porsche Truck (sorry Carol ;-), few even IN Porsche thought he hadn't lost his marbles. Yet it was precisely that model which has given them so many to play with. I look at the new Panamera and I cringe at the rear end. Yet if you cover the front doors forward, it has the lines of the 911. Cover the rear doors back and you see the same thing. How is it so ugly when you uncover both? Because we have put it into a context for which it has no precedent. And perhaps that is wrong. I am reminded of the stretch limos on Top Gear. Just because we can do something is not a reason to. So "we'll see".

Ten years ago I started a role for which the only preparation I had was an engineering degree (the wrong one, but a degree), and the fact that I had done a better job than had been expected when I had worked for that manager seven years earlier, in a job for which I was initially a mere "fill-in". And following my loss of the later role with the collapse of Enron, I doubted I would ever find another gig so great. And my role with TRW which preceded that had also been as unable to have been predicted. Yet it, also, turned out to be fabulous. So was the Duracell role which straddled it. And had been just as far off the radar of my "planning".

Yet I have never heard of anyone who succeeded WITHOUT planning. And again, my latest "career" move has been as unexpected as ever. Were I REQUIRED to produce from scratch even a single module of the code I am working with to port a Linux-based EMR (electronic medical records) system to Windows, I would fail miserably. Yet I have somehow become the leading edge of changing OpenEMR (oemr.org ;-), a free open-source EMR system which I truly believe will become the low-cost standard, precisely because of people who are even more creative (and cheap ;-)) than me. Those who have seen the 2004 Parade photos or sat around a non-campfire (WGI is anal ;-)) at 48 Hours know that I "spoof" music. I am doing precisely the same thing with OEMR, except that it is largely PHP, Perl and Javascript designed for a Linux Web server environment, something I had never even SEEN before. Yet yesterday I received kudos for merely doing what my clinician wife needed – making it possible to simply enter a different place of service within an encounter – and have it properly bill the Point of Service (a critical issue for Medicare especially), all of which is usable by the thousands of others throughout the globe using OEMR in Linux, or starting to in Windows thanks to my efforts. And that is merely one of a host of other things I have changed, because I happen to be fortunate enough to have some knowledge of both programming and the medical care Lynne is providing, so I can see how best to tailor the tools. I find it absurd and at the same time almost universal, that medical professionals know so much about the clinical side, and so little about business, while programmers know so much about making bits and bytes do wondrous things (except be intuitive ;-), while having little clue about time and motion efficiency and effectivity. So I think I have found my newest "niche", having done no more to prepare for it than to have married a clinician who suddenly needs to be computer-based, and having lived my earlier life. Now I just need to find a way to parlay some of that awareness into pictures of dead presidents. The deader the better ;-)

Could I have planned it better? Sure. But tell me that two years ago you could have predicted January 20, 2009, and we'll both laugh hysterically. Some things are simply "karma". Oh well, that's for my "Genius" side, wherever it's hiding. We'll see. ;-)

