

## Staying Connected

February 2002  
Volume 4 Issue 1

### The six-hour plan

PRISM accelerated GHS Federal Credit Union through a very successful one-day Board retreat.

### Virtual focus groups

PRISM recently completed a virtual needs assessment for the New York State Education Department.

### Virtual workspace

Better than email and listserves, PRISM's Conference Center provides distributed work teams virtual space where they can work productively online. Do participate in threaded discussions and file sharing. Do not suffer from email overload. Please call for information or go to [www.prismdecision.com](http://www.prismdecision.com) and click on Conference Center.

### Training opportunities

Look to page two for exciting opportunities to improve your creativity and decision-making skills.

### Optimal thinking tips

Do you get in thinking ruts? The battery's dead...but you continue to turn the key. Check out tips to recharge, start the engine, and move down the idea highway—pedal to the metal.

## Business services

Prism Decision Systems helps you accelerate and improve planning with dynamic group processes and state-of-the-art decision systems.

Prism accelerates a team's ability to

- Survey for needs assessment.
- Benchmark against best practice peers.
- Formulate a mission and vision.
- Set performance targets.
- Generate strategies.
- Identify priorities.
- Align resources.
- Plan for implementation.
- Make any decision.

### Face-to-face or over the Web

Meet face-to-face and use the CoNexus<sup>®</sup> suite of decision tools. Or have Prism deliver your planning event over the Internet with the Concept System<sup>®</sup>. With the Concept System<sup>®</sup>, teams can brainstorm, sort and rate ideas from their desktops at their convenience.

### Benchmarking

Use Frontier Analyst<sup>®</sup> to determine your organization's overall efficiency, set peer-based performance targets and identify best practice institutions.

For 4000 schools in New York State, Prism's benchmarking service

- Identifies best practice schools in all demographic profiles.
- Matches lower performing schools with their best practice peers.
- Sets peer-based improvement targets for all lower performing schools.

## The six-hour plan

According to Steve Gardner, president and CEO of GHS Federal Credit Union, "Prism Decision System's planning process was the best we have ever used."

### A valuable one-day retreat

Gardner and GHS faced a challenge common to small and mid-size businesses: how to make the annual Saturday Board of Directors retreat a productive day that sets the strategic direction for the organization.

Preparation was critical. Months before the Board meeting, Prism worked closely with the GHS management team to draft five-year

performance targets and strategies to achieve them.

The Saturday retreat began

**"Prism's dynamic facilitation and the skilled use of CoNexus<sup>®</sup> allowed us to move rapidly and very effectively through the strategic planning process," said CEO Gardner.**

with a series of rich, succinct management presentations to the Board. This strong informational foundation allowed the Board to move very powerfully through the planning process in just a few hours.

### Dynamic process

"Prism's dynamic facilitation and the skilled use of CoNexus<sup>®</sup> allowed us to move rapidly and very effectively through the strategic planning process," said CEO Gardner. "Our Board of Directors and senior management team are extremely pleased with—and our employees very energized by—the resulting growth plans."

## Virtual focus groups

PRISM recently completed a virtual focus group for the New York State Education Department (NYSED) using the Concept System<sup>®</sup>, a powerful, Web-enabled idea mapping and rating tool.

NYSED needed a low-cost, paperless means to assess the professional development (PD) needs of a variety of stakeholders from across the State.

Hundreds of participants logged on to a website and brainstormed 452 professional development needs. PRISM and NYSED reps analyzed these needs, eliminated redundancy, and settled on a final set of 84 needs.

Some 250 educators, including dozens of school superintendents, returned to the Web to rate the importance of the 84 needs. In the meantime, 16 volunteers sorted the same 84 statements into clusters and named those clusters.

### The Concept System<sup>®</sup>

Powerful algorithms within the Concept System<sup>®</sup> analyzed all participant sorting and rating data. The resulting concept map defines eight clusters of PD needs in order of priority. (See Cluster Rating Map).

The results were telling. There were no current PD offerings for the highest rated cluster. And the cluster with the most current offerings was rated lowest in importance.

To view the virtual brainstorm, go to [www.conceptsystems.com/projects/needs/phase1.htm](http://www.conceptsystems.com/projects/needs/phase1.htm).

To view the virtual rating, go to [www.conceptsystems.com/projects/needs/phase2.htm](http://www.conceptsystems.com/projects/needs/phase2.htm).

For the study results, go to [www.prismdecision.com](http://www.prismdecision.com), click on Public Downloads and scroll down to "Needs Assessment Report".

## Training opportunities

PRISM delivers training in efficient team planning and decision-making,

## Optimal thinking tips

Do you ever feel that a brilliant, creative alternative is just within your grasp...only to feel frustration as you settle for the same old solutions? Looking for a sure-fire way to get out of your mental rut and, in the words of Jim Morrison, "break on through to the other side"?

### Assumption Busting

Assumptions can act as a powerful constraint on your thinking. Consider the game of tetherball. Just as the pole and rope determine the distance and route the tetherball can travel, an assumption defines the universe of options available to solve any problem. Creativity often requires assumption busting: identifying key assumptions, ruthlessly questioning their validity, generating new assumptions, and then asking "What if?" To complete the analogy, you need to dig up and move the pole; or even better: cut the rope and see where the ball sails.

### World Class Assumption Busters

From Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*  
The search for assumptions can be an effective way to weaken the grip of tradition upon the mind and to suggest the basis for a new one.

From Edward DeBono, *Lateral Thinking*  
It is historical continuity that maintains most assumptions – not repeated assessment of their validity.



including creative problem solving, conflict resolution and consensus building. Other upcoming training opportunities include:

*The 17th Annual Conference on The Positive Power of Humor and Creativity*, April 12-14, 2002 in Saratoga Springs, New York. Go to [www.humorproject.com](http://www.humorproject.com).

*The International Association of Facilitators Conference 2002*, in Fort Worth, Texas, May 23 - 26, 2002. Go to [www.iaf-world.org](http://www.iaf-world.org).

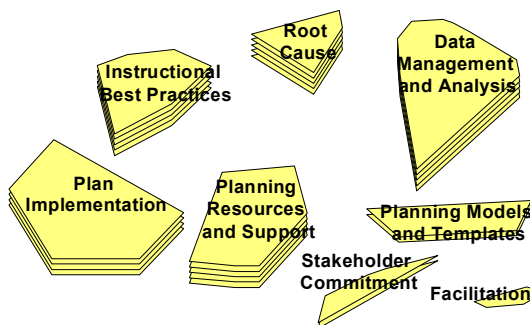
*The 47th Annual Creative Problem Solving Institute*, considered the

world's premier creativity conference, June 16-21, 2002, Adams Mark Hotel, Buffalo, NY. Go to [www.cef-cpsi.org](http://www.cef-cpsi.org).

## Engagements

Arnot Medical Services  
Binghamton City Schools  
Binghamton Summer Music Festival  
Borough of Fanwood, NJ  
Chenango Memorial Hospital  
City of Grand Rapids, MI  
City School District of Albany  
Education 21, Inc.  
GHS Federal Credit Union  
The Greater Boston Visitor and Convention Bureau  
*The Los Angeles Times*  
Lockport City Schools  
Mercy Health System  
National Institute for Health  
New York State Education Department  
New York State Electric & Gas  
Oswego City Schools  
Potsdam City Schools  
Science Applications International Corporation  
Telcordia Technologies  
Three Village Central Schools  
Times Mirror Company  
United Health Services  
United Medical Associates  
Washington, DC Metro Transit Authority

### Virtual Focus Group: Cluster Rating Map



The concept map displays the group's sorting and rating of statements of need: the more layers to a cluster, the greater its importance.