

MUSTARD

DOESN'T GO

ON CORN!

HOW RESPECT, OPENNESS, AND A SIMPLE PROCESS
FOR IDEAS CAN SAVE AMERICA

RICHARD TROMBETTA



Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn!

How respect, openness, and a simple process for new ideas
can save America

By Richard Trombetta

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Introduction

From www.angus-reid.com

How in touch is Congress with the American public?

	Jun. '05	Jul. '03
In touch	38%	52%
Not in touch	54%	35%
Not sure	9%	13%

This version of Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! is designed to take many of the concepts in the book, *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! – How respect, openness, and a simple process for innovation can lead to great ideas*, and transfer them into tangible and practical means to help – and dare I try to be so bold - save our country.

As an American citizen, I can't take it any more. I can't take the yelling. The posturing. The partisan politics. The constant arguing. The lack of results. The refusal to listen and understand. The bickering.

I am an American and a proud husband and parent as well. This version of Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! is my attempt to take a philosophy and approach that is proven to work in companies and instill it in the public sector. Why am I doing this? Not only out of frustration, but hopefully it will pave the road for an America that is more united than divided. A country that focuses more on working together to solve problems rather than simply voting down party lines. A country that will enable my daughters to be safe, be healthy, and be successful at whatever they choose to do.

One big disclaimer: I am a registered Independent. I have voted for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents and will continue to do so.

Also, this version of Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! assumes you have read or are familiar with the key concepts in *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! – How respect, openness, and a simple process for innovation can lead to great ideas*.

So how will this version of Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! ultimately help the United States? It will help America by proposing tangible and practical action items that every American can do to immediately after finishing reading this document. As in my book, *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! – How respect, openness, and a simple process for innovation can lead to great ideas*, the theme is to make things EASY. That is how we will get things done.

What topics will we discuss? How about some easy ones like religion, immigration, the use of military force, security and terrorism, healthcare, and just for kicks, let's throw in education. I think that should just about do it. If we get through those then we can get tackle some others. But let's start small.

You may be saying, "how in so few pages can we address all of these issues?" That is the beauty of this approach. The approach transcends the issue. Regardless of topic, the approach is the same. Therefore, by applying the principals and processes described in *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! – How respect, openness, and a simple process for innovation can lead to great ideas* to issues facing America, major social and economic issues and problems can be solved.

This version of *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn!* does not have all the answers to the problems. It has the process that as Americans we need to follow to solve the problems. The bad news is there are a lot of problems in the world these days. The good news – no make that the great news – is that there are many, many great ideas inside of people that are trying so hard to come out. To be listened to. To be respected. To be debated in a healthy manner – and I can't stress healthy enough. And most importantly – to be implemented!

The introduction to *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! – How respect, openness, and a simple process for innovation can lead to great ideas* is available on my web site (www.innovationiseasy.com) but for those who may be away from a computer right now, here are some highlights.

Why is the book titled "Mustard Doesn't Go on Corn!?"

I once brought my young daughter to a small children's museum. Everywhere I looked I saw words like explore, discover, and imagine. In one section of the museum there is a small play kitchen that can accommodate about 10 kids. I was watching my daughter have a

grand old time putting plastic grapes in the play oven when I saw a remarkable event. There was a little boy about 3 or 4 years old who had a plate with some plastic corn on it. He said to his mom, "OK, mom, I'm going to put mustard on your corn." Just as he was about to do so his mom said in a semi-nurturing voice, "mustard doesn't go on corn." It was at that moment in time I realized why innovation is so difficult for companies and our society.

Here was a little kid seeing words and images encouraging him to explore and imagine and the second he does, boom –'mustard doesn't go on corn!' The kid's face dropped. What made it worse is what happened next. Another little kid very emphatically said, "No, mustard doesn't go on corn." You may be asking 'what's the big deal here?' But just think, in a matter of seconds the kid had his idea shot down by an authority figure and was piled on by a peer. Yikes! Being the instigator I am, I could not just sit back and watch this happen. I said, "I like mustard on corn." The kid looked confused. "I do. I put mustard on everything I eat." His eyes got big and he smiled. "You do?" he asked. "Yup, even on spaghetti." Suddenly energy started to take over that little kitchen. Within seconds other kids were getting involved and now mustard on corn didn't seem so foolish after all.

Let's play out this same scenario with a problem facing America. A young woman has an idea to help her small town with education and public schools. She gets excited about the idea and shares it with some people on the school board. The response is "The problem with your idea is that...blah, blah, blah." Frustrated, she leaves, feeling there is no hope to change things. She goes home and someone asks her, "you have a lot of good ideas, why don't you get involved with politics?" She rolls her eyes in disgust.

Do you want to join me in ending stories like this? Do you want to help save America? Do you want to greatly impact the world and position the United States for prosperity for decades to come? If you do, please join me – time is running out.

Let's work together...

OK. Let's get right into it!

Action item:

Write down your definition of a conservative:

Write down what conservatives want for their families/children:

Write down your definition of a liberal:

Write down what liberals want for their families/children:

What have you learned from this exercise?

To summarize this exercise, try starting where you get along, rather than where you disagree. It may sound obvious, but how often do you find your self in a heated argument with someone when in fact what you both want are the same.

For example, the Iraq War. There many views supporting the war and many against the war. But what do we all want? Is there any American who does not want the troops to come home safely? Is there any American who does not want a peaceful world for their families are children? Maybe there are, and I would propose that number is very tiny. Knowing that almost everyone wants the troops to come home safely, why not say, "ok, how about we start our discussion where we agree – rather than where we disagree – and work from there."

A USA Today/Gallup poll conducted in March of 2006 cited that only "27 per cent of respondents approve of the way the U.S. Congress is handling its job." Only 27 percent. That means that 73 percent agree that Congress is not handling its job well. Why is this significant? This means that Republicans and Democrats actually can agree on something – Congress is not handling its job well. Let's start there. Let's come together – Republicans and Democrats - and say, "Almost three quarters of us agree that Congress as a whole is not handling its job well. How do we work together to change this?" Start where there is agreement, not disagreement. And guess what? The next step is not to simply blame 'the other side.'

Ironically, while so many of us feel upset about Congress, less than half of Americans vote in national elections. More votes were cast for the contestants on the final episode of American Idol in 2006 than in any single Presidential election. Yikes. People are not voting. People are not respecting other points of view. People are not open to the ideas of others. This needs to change and it needs to change now. I propose that respect and openness is as important as voting – and it is not optional if we want to work together to get things done.

Let's get back to the business at hand. Which topic should we start with? Immigration? Healthcare? Religion? Pick a topic, any topic. Just like a magician, it does not matter which card you pick - he will find your card. That is the same with my approach. Regardless of topic, the principals are the same. Let's start with an easy one - immigration.

The issue of illegal immigration in the Unites States is becoming a bigger and bigger issue every day. Millions are in this country illegally and the threat to the nations security is at risk. In addition, the impact on the economy, especially the agricultural community, is massive. So what does the country do? Ship 'them' out? Create a 'path to citizenship?' Build a fence?

Action item:

Write down your solution to the illegal immigration problem facing America.

Action item:

Think of someone who you know that most likely has a different view than you do on illegal immigration. Speak with that person and share your idea.

What was the response?

Did he or she immediately get defensive and begin a debate? How did you feel?

Now ask them for his or her ideas on illegal immigration. Rather than debate them, try paraphrasing what they just said and sincerely try to understand his or her point of view. Ask clarifying questions. Let them do the talking – you do the listening!

What did you learn? Hopefully you experienced a civil discussion. That is the paramount lesson in this version of *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn!* and in *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! – How respect, openness, and a simple process for innovation can lead to great ideas*. Truly respect others for their input, be open to new ideas, and follow a simple process to take these ideas from thoughts to action and bam – things will get done. The process for getting things implemented is NEWIDEA!™ Here is a graphic which outlines the behaviors in the NEWIDEA! approach.

N – No negativity!



E – Encourage the person



W – Wait...and LISTEN!



I – Include input



D – Document the idea



E – Evaluate and explore options



A – Action!



Action item:

Talk with someone who has different views than you do on as many of the following subjects as possible. Did you just cringe? Are you bracing yourself for an argument? Relax. Things will be civil.

- Domestic spying
- Education in America
- Homelessness
- The war in Iraq
- Immigration
- The role of religion in America

Your job is to listen and to make sure you understand the other person's point of view.

Hopefully what you learned is that to truly get something done, the key is to listen and understand - not to jam your ideas down someone's throat. You may not agree with the other person and he or she may not agree with you. However, by having a respectful and civil discussion that is grounded in listening - not getting your view across - the odds of working together on the issue are much higher. What is the alternative? An unhealthy argument begins, the two sides become more polarized, and yet again, nothing gets done.

Have we solved all the problems in America? No. If we have conversations where we listen and try to understand each other will we make progress? Yes. Regardless if it is immigration, religion, or any other topic, we as Americans - all of us - need to unite and work together. We are on our way.

Action item:

Here are some examples of recent statements – some by the right, some by the left.

"We should invade their countries, kill their leaders, and convert them to Christianity!" -Ann Coulter (on 9/11 terrorists)

"This administration is waging war on poor children," - Hillary Clinton

"It is true that if you are poor and can't afford a good lawyer, your odds of going to prison skyrocket. But you know what? Tough!" -Bill O' Reilly

Republicans are planning "the deliberate, intentional destruction of the United States of America." - Bill Moyers

Do you think these discussions are helping or hurting America?

Are you making statements like these? If you are, how are you helping America?

Action item: Case study

The following is an excerpt from a nationally televised TV program. At the end of this excerpt there are four questions. The questions are designed to help you think about the concepts in this book as they relate to a real life political discussion.

The hosts of the TV program were speaking with a Republican Senator from Kentucky, Majority Whip Mitch McConnell. I have purposely not mentioned the name of the show or the host(s) to limit any potential bias you, the reader, may have. The fact that the Senator is Republican remains only because he mentions 'the other guys.'

MCCONNELL: Well, I think we what we have to do is remind the American people what the other guys are for. What they would do is wave the white flag in the War on Terror and raise your taxes. That's what they for. You give the Democrats the majority in the House and Senate, and that's exactly what they will do."

Questions:

1. Do you believe what the Senator said? Why or why not?

2. List out examples of how his statements can help America.

3. List out examples of how his statements could hurt America.

4. What do you ultimately learn from this exercise?

Recap

So what are the lessons from all of this? Have we in 20 pages or less solved the America's problems? Yes and no. We may not have solved them but now we are in better position to do so.

Here is a recap. In addition to reading *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! – How respect, openness, and a simple process for innovation can lead to great ideas* and the completing the action items in this text we are well on our way to making progress. To summarize:

- Don't shoot down other's ideas just because they may have a D or an R in front of his or her name – this is ruining America.
- Listen, listen, listen and try to understand – don't judge!
- Remember that almost all of us want the same thing – a good future for our children.
- Working together we can get things done. Polarized we fail.
- No one – and this may be tough to accept – has all the answers.
- Building on number 5, no political party is absolutely correct.
- Ask yourself, "What good can come from such polarized and partisan statements?"

And the biggest lesson of all? YOU, as an American, have the ability to help keep America great. By following the philosophy outlined in *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn! – How respect, openness, and a simple process for innovation can lead to great ideas* and by completing the action items in this version of *Mustard Doesn't Go On Corn!*, TOGETHER we can address the major issues facing the United States. Ideas and solutions for problems that seem so large are inside all of us – they just need to come out.

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The Innovation Company's mission and vision

Mission

The mission of The Innovation Company is to inspire individuals and organizations to create respectful, open, and innovative work and family environments that encourage people to constantly share and implement new ideas.

Vision

The vision of The Innovation Company is one in which all individuals, regardless of their position in the workplace or society, can present new ideas and suggestions and receive a respectful response from others that demonstrates the sincere willingness to be open to different points of views.

About the author

Rich Trombetta is a 15-year veteran of corporate America, working in various roles for such organizations as GE Capital, Fidelity Investments and Thomson Financial. In addition, he worked as a sports producer for an ABC affiliate in Providence, Rhode Island, was an NBC Page in New York City.

He is currently the President of The Innovation Company, LLC located in Acton, Massachusetts. He works with companies that want to get EVERY employee constantly sharing and implementing new ideas. His clients include Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Genworth Financial, AIG, and CARQUEST.

Rich is involved with several non-profit organizations and even co-founded his own non-profit company, SpeakUp, Inc., which taught presentation skills to urban youths. He also serves on the Board of Directors of Generations Incorporated, a leader in uniting children and older individuals to improve literacy in Boston's public schools.

Rich holds a degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and has completed graduate work at Northeastern University. He lives in the Boston, Massachusetts area with his wife, two daughters, and two cats.

