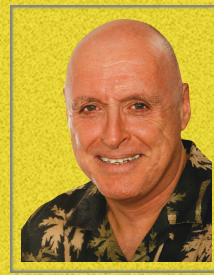


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



407 Different Eyes Can Mean a Different Prize

How black can black be? I'm going to have that answer for you in just a moment, plus we'll see what we can find when we're not looking for it. I'm Jerry Roberts and today it's going to be a little bit different, on The Extra Point.

The article in Fast Company magazine said "Vantablack took the world by storm for being the blackest black known to humankind. Its carbon nanotube surface—a nano-scale forest of billions of tiny carbon trees — absorbs up to 99.964% of light striking it." Photons, which is what light is made of, can't penetrate it. An observer described it as so dark "it feels like part of your soul is being sucked out through your eyeballs."

Now to answer the question posed, "How black can black be?" While the rest of the world was being shocked by Vantablack, MIT scientists discovered a black that is technically 10 times darker.

To highlight their findings they coated a 16.78 carat yellow diamond with it. The \$2 million diamond is rated as the most brilliant material on earth. The new black made the diamond basically disappear.

The twist to the discovery is that the scientists responsible for creating the new blackest black weren't trying to do so. They were testing another layer of carbon nano tubes, to see if it would work better in commercially profitable applications like electronics and microprocessors. Even small improvements there can be worth many millions, perhaps billions of dollars.

They had invited an artist into their group and he wasn't focused on the same things the scientists were considering. Instead, he was looking at optical properties, the blackness and what that would mean. He saw that the new substances appeared blacker than the existing material, and that led to the breakthrough.

The fact that the team had found a substance that broke the existing record for the blackest black was fine, but the scientists had another realization. It was that the artist was the one who actually influenced the science. "Without that collaboration," said one scientist, "we wouldn't have looked."

There's a couple of important points to make that I feel we can all learn from.

1. They were testing something altogether different, and for a different reason, when the breakthrough came. They wouldn't have seen it if it hadn't been for the artist. His orientation is unique from theirs, so he was drawn to the visuals immediately. He had "new eyes" and saw what the others could not.

What goes on around us every day that our eyes are so used to, that we really don't see it any more? What has our brain masked from our consciousness that is now basically invisible to us, yet would be seen right away by someone just visiting our house, or office.

2. Could there be a practical advantage to take the lesson from this story, and the next time you go into a strategy session or some sort of brainstorming, that you invite people from other departments to join you? Can you include people who are not directly associated with your work to take part? Could there be a breakthrough waiting for you, because a new person see things nobody on your team can see, because they're looking with new eyes?

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts. ###

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