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creative**4**business

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We have added a new **Bite Size Creativity** workshop to our offerings. This is an ideal taster session or for use by smaller businesses with limited time and budget in the recession. Read more and download an info sheet here.

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first edition of Innovation Matters for 2009. Publication has slipped a day or two to what we hope will be a permanent date during the first week of every month.

From this issue we are using a trusted domain for sending which means that some corporate readers sitting behind firewalls might be surprised at their first issue for some time. If this is the case we hope you like what you see.

This month there are two articles which are intended to ask questions and get readers thinking. Your thoughts and reactions are welcomed. Many thanks to those who have already seen the article on Soft Infrastructure and have provided feedback.

For those readers who have not met SCAMPER there is a simple guide to a technique that can be used either on your own or with friends or colleagues.

Did you know that if you employ 5-249 people then you may qualify for Government funding of up to £1000 towards any of our workshops or programmes. **Get in touch** now to find out more.

Details of all our workshops and programmes including **Domino² Knowledgeware**, **Futures**, **Intelligent Growth**, **Business Creativity**, **Idea Generation** and **Creating The Difference** can be downloaded from our [downloads](#) page.

The 'rough and ready' survey of the major barriers to creativity within organisations is still located on my [Home Page](#). If you currently work, or have worked for an organisation then I would appreciate it if you could take the time to click on two buttons.

Please also look to your left and see what the latest news is. Don't forget that you can revisit past editions of Innovation Matters in our [newsletter archive](#). Happy reading,

Derek Cheshire

The Need For A Soft Infrastructure

Governments and most businesses will readily understand the term 'infrastructure'. It is a collective term for roads, railways, airports, ports, telecommunications networks, supply pipelines etc. It is all to do with movement and these networks are all 'hard' i.e. they are made out of steel, concrete and copper and they can all be touched.

These networks all have one other common characteristic, whatever flows through them is rigidly controlled. Sometimes in straight lines and some times curves but always controlled by a boundary of concrete, steel, copper or some other tangible resource.

So what has this got to do with my organisation you may ask? One of the keys to the success of modern businesses, and the way to beat the current recession is Innovation. Innovation depends greatly on assets that are intangible, we cannot touch them. These include creativity, know how, intuition and cultural issues to name but a few. Many would identify these as 'social' or 'human' capital. The exact terminology is irrelevant, it is the ideas and knowledge of individuals that is important which can be enhanced by interaction. It is also independent of work so the term 'social' means inclusive rather than outside of the workplace.

To innovate successfully, these things too must move around both our businesses and our societies. Attempts have often been made in the

past to codify these ideas, transmit them to another place and then try and extract both the message and the meaning of what has been received. Try having an email exchange with an angry colleague and you will understand the problems.

When we innovate, we also want things to travel in ways that are not constrained by boundaries and which certainly do not travel in straight lines. Read the full article ...

Making Use Of Institutional Failings

Normally we tend to diagnose failings within our organisations and then combat them with remedial programmes that often dismantle and then rebuild certain aspects of the organisation. Note that these characteristics are independent of the individuals that work within the organisation.

A well publicised example of such a failing was the accusation of institutionalised racism that was leveled at the Metropolitan Police here in the UK. No one individual was accused of being racist but the structure, processes, distribution of power, expressions of vision and beliefs was deemed to be supportive of racism.

So what might some of the characteristics of an institutional failing be and how can they be used to help us? I have alluded to one or two already but here is a short list:

- Strong beliefs and a mechanism for communicating them
- Well or clearly defined structures and processes
- Power centred on a few individuals
- An active 'grapevine' for informal communications
- Well aligned communications, trust and advice networks
- High degree of focus (not necessarily concern for) on people

This is not an exhaustive list but is representative of many undesirable institutional failings. Our natural tendency is to remove such characteristics through one or more change programmes and possibly staff development of some sort. For a large organisation the changes must be far reaching, difficult to plan (and control) and of course expensive. Had we been looking at undesirable furniture or waste paper then we would automatically think of recycling. Why not recycle these unwanted organisational characteristics and use them for a positive purpose?

One possible idea might be to create 'institutionalised creativity', a type of creativity that is inbuilt and pervades every part of the organisation in such a way that employees do not consciously think about it. Lets make use of a strong beliefs system (but change the beliefs), take advantage of clearly defined structures (but turn them into looser frameworks), use the company grapevine (as part of this process), be focused (but change this slightly) and make use of the centres of power (but make these sponsors of creative or innovative behaviour).

Such a programme may not be easy, but is it better than turning a whole organisation upside down?

Introducing SCAMPER

This is an idea generation tool that can be used either solo or in groups. It is best used for generating ideas about something that you wish to modify in some way such as upgrade or enhance a current product or service. You need to create a 'problem statement' e.g. How might we make our car go faster?

SCAMPER is an acronym as defined below. Select a letter from the list and read its trigger word and associated questions. Ask yourself what new ideas do this word and questions suggest or try to associate the question and trigger word with your original statement. Record your ideas and then repeat this as many times as you want, each time picking a new letter from the SCAMPER list. Note you do not have to use the letters in sequence.

Substitute: what might you take away and put back in its place? What might you substitute, replace, exchange. Think of who else, what else, other ingredients, other material, different approach?

Combine: what two or more things might you put together? What could you combine this with, what sort of blend or alloy, assortment or ensemble?

Adapt: how might you change something to solve the problem? What could you do differently, what else is similar, have we done this before, what can I copy?

Modify, magnify, minify: what can be made bigger or smaller? How would things change if the object were made bigger or smaller. What

could be increased or reduced in size or which attributes could be enhanced or diminished?

Put to other uses: what might be used in a different way? Can this be used for different purposes, does its properties suggest other uses, do its properties such as size or weight suggest other uses, can it be used in another context?

Eliminate: what might you get rid of? Can you leave something out, condense or concentrate, remove parts, make lighter?

Rearrange or reverse: what might you mix up or move around? Can you reverse roles, turn upside down (backwards or inside out), change perspective, alter timing, change objectives?

Your recorded ideas may themselves be combined or investigated further if necessary. Note these may not be sensible ideas (although they could be) and may just suggest ways forward for you or your business.

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