

## News on Creativity and Innovation related topics

June 2009

creative4business

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#### News

**Creativity To Go** is our new **FREE** virtual Creativity and Innovation **clinic**. Just send your questions via our website, email or twitter and we will reply within an hour or two. Quick questions only please!

**Creative Leadership Award**. This will be endorsed as an **ILM Leadership**

### Dear Reader,

Welcome to the fifth edition of Innovation Matters for 2009. Last month I published a link to a Youtube video featuring the Black Missionaries, a reggae band from Malawi. This generated quite a bit of positive feedback so if you wish to hear more please [visit this site](#) to download some more tracks.

The article 'Thoughts from under African skies' created some great feedback too and has helped inspire one of this month's articles, **The Magic of Metaphor**. This month we also take a look at **Creative Leadership For Tough Times**.

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

On June 20th I shall be speaking on the topic of **From Head To Market** at the opening of **Gaynor O'Flynn's** Beinghuman creativity and innovation warehouse. [Click here](#) for more information.

The creative4business website is currently undergoing a facelift. If you are

**Development Award.** Details of our workshop and distance learning based variants are available on request.

Are you on Twitter? If so you can [follow Derek Cheshire](#) (only if you want to of course!)

Workshop and programme details can be downloaded from our [downloads](#) page.

My survey of the major barriers to creativity within organisations has been given a facelift. It is located on my [Home Page](#).

curious, take a look in a couple of weeks. We'll tell you all about it next month anyway!  
Happy reading,

Derek Cheshire

## The Magic of Metaphor

First of all what is a metaphor? Here I use the term metaphor and simile interchangeably but technically a simile is simply saying that one thing is like something else and a metaphor is saying that one thing is something else. A simile is thus a metaphor but a metaphor is not necessarily a simile. Enough of the terminology!

Sometimes exaggeration or humour might be involved to help make the point. Many men might use the metaphor of their mother-in-law being a dragon. They are not saying that she literally breathes fire and flies but that she might be a little fierce and protective of her daughter (or dominating her husband!!). You get the point.

Metaphor can help us all in a number of ways. For instance I am a very visual person so when people insist on describing things to me using just words I have to try very hard to take in all of the information. If, however, someone says that the situation is like say, finding a needle in a haystack then I



comprehend the situation quite quickly i.e. I know the amount of effort required and the likely outcome. To reach a wider audience you might need to try using metaphors that rely on different language for those people who respond to audio or kinesthetic stimuli.

I often use a particular type of metaphor when explaining the usefulness of using creative or alternative techniques to examine a problem situation. I'm sure that many readers will have experienced the horrors of hunting for a house or flat. You have a look at the particulars and one person focuses on the kitchen, another on the garden and another on the bedrooms or garage. All of these individuals are seeing the same situation but from different viewpoints. So just like viewing a property we can examine other scenarios (physical or otherwise) from different perspectives. One or more of these might even provide a solution (in the case of a problem) or suggest a course of action.

Keen followers of Agatha Christie's fictional character Miss Marple will be familiar with her technique of mapping happenings of the wider world with things she could understand that occurred in her own village of St Mary Mead. So already we have a list of things that metaphors can help us with:

- Giving explanations to those unfamiliar with a concept
- Examining problem situations from an alternative perspective
- Reframing situations
- Communicating concepts to a wider audience
- Learning or making sense of a concept that we are not currently familiar with

Another interesting use for metaphor is within stories and for use as a more sophisticated business tool but that is an article all of its own. But how about the application of metaphor, will it work for everyone and will it work everywhere?

We can use metaphor directly in:

- Business
- Politics
- Creative Industries and the media
- Any other areas that rely on human interaction

Metaphor works best when individuals can 'connect' easily with metaphors i.e. they are used to metaphor or storytelling and their lives are not littered with distractions. In developed countries we are buried underneath mountains of gadgets which we either rely on to automate our lives or which we take great delight in exploring in detail - we either want it to work or we

want to read the instructions in detail. We do not wish to know that our new MP3 player is like a pepperoni pizza (or perhaps a more appropriate metaphor). I am speaking generally here, those who are emotionally intelligent will be using metaphor regularly.

In developing countries there is less technology and less complexity in life generally (but life is often very hard) and so people are often closer to their emotions. Storytelling and metaphors will work well here and have a very powerful effect. Rather like the argument that I put forward in a previous article regarding creativity in developed and developing countries, education also plays a part. So once again, who is best placed to take advantage of techniques such as this? Developed countries have a head start in the race to develop and are thus nearer the finishing line, but developing countries have the potential to be the faster runners!!!



### Creative Leadership For Tough Times

Surely we just need good strong Leadership in tough times not 'airy fairy' Creative Leadership? If you share this view then I think we have our wires crossed already. Let me explain.

In the current economic climate we do need strong (or should I say bold) Leaders but traditional Leaders (and I include those who are up to date with such concepts as transformational and situational leadership here) often have a Leadership toolbox that is comprehensive but perhaps identical to those carried around by other Leaders. So if we all have the same tools and we all operate in the same marketplace then we still have a stalemate.

And now for the Creativity bit. I am not suggesting that our bold Leaders walk around with an armful of creative techniques and nothing else, just that they should supplement their Leadership toolbox with a selection of techniques that provide alternative ways of analysing and solving problems, decision making, planning and communicating. Leaders then have a larger repertoire of business tools at their disposal from which they can select the most appropriate and most effective.

But why are Creative techniques particularly good for the tough economic climate that we are now faced with? In short they can:

- Provide competitive advantage as their usage often relies on tacit knowledge
- Are more likely to unearth solutions that no one else has thought of or tried
- Allow Leaders more time to focus on real business issues - these techniques can save time
- Permit greater buy in from colleagues and employees and thus less resistance to change
- Build intrinsic motivation amongst the workforce

Even in highly regulated industries such as Financial Services, Leaders can enhance their capability in this way. Remember it is only the outputs of your processes that may be regulated. Internally there are usually alternative ways of doing things!

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