

## News on Creativity and Innovation related topics

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### Dear Reader,

Welcome to the November edition of **Innovation Matters**, the tenth of 2010.

This month we have the second in our series of top tips, just jump to the left hand side of this page to find yours.

Currently I am preparing to speak at a series of seminars in Iran which will provide some interesting insights into Creativity and Innovation within a very different cultural setting. There will be more to come in next month's newsletter.

This month's articles once again focus on Creativity. Did you know that the type of **thinking** that helped **rescue the Chilean miners** is exactly the same stuff that you can use in your business! There are many **myths** surrounding **Creativity** so we do our best to **dispel** them in the second article. Finally, there is an old favourite to highlight the fact that to get the right answers we need to ask the right questions. So **Does My Bum Look Big In This?**



**Explore the 'givens'.** Re-examine your assumptions. Just because something was impossible last year, it may be possible now.

Examine all of the rules and boundaries within which you operate, have they changed or are they not as restrictive as you first thought?

If you want something to watch why not see Derek's interview for **Guru View TV**? To take a look [click here](#).

If you have missed previous editions of Innovation Matters you can find them in at [www.creative4business.co.uk/archives.html](http://www.creative4business.co.uk/archives.html).

As always, your thoughts and feedback are welcome.

Happy reading,

Derek Cheshire



## How Creativity Helped To Rescue Chilean Miners

Most people will be familiar with the recent heart warming story of the rescue of 33 Chilean miners who had been trapped underground for 69 days. Many readers will be wondering what Creativity had to do with their rescue. Surely it was good old fashioned drilling that won the day? Well yes, and no.

In the end the drills did provide an escape route, but how did those involved in the rescue get to that endpoint once they had established that the miners were alive? You can imagine a series of conversations starting with the phrase "well we could ..." and ending with "that is too dangerous" or "that will not work".

Now imagine a scenario where someone suggests that what is required is an escape route just big enough to fit a man. Rather than put obstacles in the way further suggestions are made such as "we could drill a pilot hole and widen it", "I have a friend with a big drill but he can't get here for a week ...". When each suggestion is made, it is built upon rather than dismissed out of hand so that slowly the solution is built up. We then have the 'race of the drills', the Fenix capsule, the liners in case of rock instability and a whole host of smaller issues.

The three main drivers of Creativity are often said to be knowledge/experience, techniques (in this case it includes engineering tools), and intrinsic motivation. The Chileans knew how to combine these three, and there was absolutely no way that those miners would be left underground.

So just reflect for a moment. This was not an episode of pure Creativity but the 'tools and techniques' used were identical to those that I advocate in workshops. If they are powerful enough to rescue 33 trapped men from 700m below the ground just think what they could do for your business!



# Myths about creativity

## Busting Some Myths Surrounding Business Creativity

### **Myth #1 Creativity Comes From Creative Types**

The fact is, nearly all the research in this field shows that anyone with normal intelligence is capable of doing some creative work. Creativity depends on a number of things: experience, including knowledge and technical skills; talent; an ability to think in new ways; and the capacity to push through uncreative dry spells. Intrinsic motivation -- people who are turned on by their work often work creatively -- is especially critical.

### **Myth #2 Money Is a Creativity Motivator**

Research shows that people put far more value on a work environment where creativity is supported, valued, and recognised. People want the opportunity to deeply engage in their work and make real progress. It is therefore critical for managers to match people to projects not only on the basis of their experience but also in terms of where their interests lie. People are most creative when they care about their work and they are being stretched.

### **Myth #3 Time Pressure Fuels Creativity**

People are least creative when they are racing the clock. Actually, you may find that there are 'after effects' -- when people are working under great pressure, their creativity is likely to go down not only on that day but the following day or two days also. Time pressure stifles creativity because people can't deeply engage with the problem. Creativity requires an incubation period; people need time to soak in a problem and let the ideas bubble up.

### **Myth #4 Fear Forces Breakthroughs**

A US research project coded 12,000 diary entries for the degree of fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, joy, and love that people were experiencing on a given day. They found that creativity is positively associated with joy and love and negatively associated with anger, fear, and anxiety. The entries showed that people are happiest when they come up with a creative idea, but they're more likely to have a breakthrough if they were happy the day before. When people are excited about their work, there's a better chance that they'll make a cognitive association that incubates overnight

and shows up as a creative idea the next day. One day's happiness often predicts the next day's creativity!

### **Myth #5 Competition Beats Collaboration**

Creativity takes a hit when people in a work group compete instead of collaborate. The most creative teams are those that have the confidence to share and debate ideas. But when people compete for recognition, they stop sharing information. And that's destructive because nobody in an organisation has all of the information required to put all the pieces of the puzzle together.

### **Myth #6 A Streamlined Organisation Is a Creative Organisation**

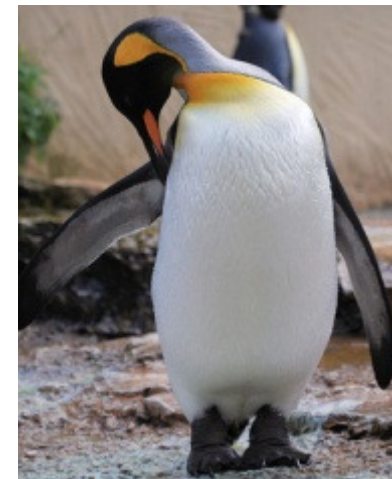
Creativity suffers greatly during a downsizing or restructuring. But it's often worse than many of us realise. A 6,000-person division of a global electronics company experienced a 25% downsizing, which lasted a painful 18 months. Every single one of the stimuli of creativity in the work environment was significantly reduced. Anticipation of the downsizing was worse than the downsizing itself -- people's fear of the unknown led them to basically disengage from the work. More troubling was the fact that five months after the downsizing, creativity was still significantly reduced.

### **Does My Bum Look Big In This?**

As every man knows, this is a question that is impossible to answer. Say 'yes' and you will either be dead within seconds or you will be drowning in tears to the words 'Are you saying I'm fat and ugly? You don't love me any more do you?' Reply 'no' and you will be accused of not wanting your partner to be slim and resemble a supermodel.

Joking aside, what sort of question is this anyway? Does it help, is there likely to be a way forward, can we develop a win-win situation? Much of creative thinking and hence innovation projects are based on subtle questions being asked at the right time. The art of questioning is paramount. Here are some examples of frequently heard, but not always helpful questions together with some suggested alternatives:

- Why do we always do it this way? What sort of things would happen if we did it



- this (or any other) way?
- Will it work? If it does not work, what is likely to happen?
  - How much will it cost? What is the target cost that we need to be aiming for?
  - What are we doing this for? The learning opportunities are incredible. Can we explore all of the options and capture the results?
  - When can we have a meeting to discuss this? We will start doing some prototyping and let you know our initial results as soon as we have them!

These alone could cause some of your team to lose the will to live. Assume you do actually get started, what about some questions that will help the creative process? The questions you ask will depend on whether you want to stimulate thinking, shift perspective, motivate others or break mindsets to name just a few. Here are one or two suggestions:

- What would happen if we added banana flavouring? - random stimulus
- What would happen if we did not do this at all? - shift perspective
- All options are open, can we explore as many as possible and record our findings? - motivational
- As we are all here can we try plan b instead of plan a and see what happens? - break mindset with different method plus peer pressure

As ever, this article is designed to make readers think about the questions they use. Oh and about the question in the title. Say 'you look great', 'I agree with you' or encourage a question of the type 'I think I look great/fat/ugly/young, don't you agree?' If you think this is still fraught with danger then pretend not to hear the question.

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