

News on Creativity and Innovation related topics

December 2010

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the December edition of **Innovation Matters**, the tenth and final edition of 2010. The next edition of Innovation Matters will arrive in your inbox at the start of February 2011.

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

During November I was lucky enough to travel to Iran to speak at a series of conferences. First of all I would like to say 'hello' and a huge 'thank you' to the people who made this possible and the people who showed extraordinary hospitality whilst I was there. Their feedback has also shaped some of the thinking in the articles for this edition of Innovation matters and also confirmed the the fact that the Innovation Equation really can be applied anywhere!

This month's articles once again focus on three areas. There is a tongue in cheek look at **how to avoid being creative** plus a brief look at **Innovation and national cultures**. Finally I use the metaphor of **Slow**



Cycle often, close late. Allow for iterations and avoid premature closure.

If you do not have to make a decision, or submit a document - don't. Living with ambiguity and waiting a little might create that opportunity for a better solution to come along. Park the problem and revisit it several times.

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

Food to challenge a few assumptions about whether or not we are taking the right path through innovation.

If you have missed previous editions of Innovation Matters you can find them all at www.creative4business.co.uk/archives.html.

The festive season is almost upon us so I would like to take this opportunity to wish all readers a safe and happy Christmas and of course a prosperous New Year.

See you in 2011,
Derek Cheshire



Psst - Wanna Avoid Being Creative?

There are many lists of how to do something, but what if you want to avoid doing something? What if you wanted to avoid being creative? If this is you, then follow these tips and you are well down the path to being as intellectually dull as ditch water!



1. Follow the same routine every day, for everything.
2. You will not see this because you have read item number one and think you know it all!
3. Assume that your way of thinking is always right and your ideas are the best.
4. Only pretend to listen to other people's ideas, they know nothing.
5. Play it safe, avoid taking chances. Never have a different sauce on your burger.
6. Copy everyone else.
7. Plan everything to the last detail BEFORE you start doing it.
8. Pretend not to care and not to be inspired.
9. Never take time to chill out and rest your brain.
10. Believe that alternative modes of thinking are for actors and artists.

Finally, if you recognise any of the above traits in your work colleagues then please get in touch. There is a chance that they can be saved.



Innovation and culture

Whilst talking to many people about innovation there is one question that they all ask. 'Do you have experience of working in my industry sector?'. Quite often the answer is 'no' and the conversation ends there as many people are risk averse. I have always maintained that the good innovation models (mine included of course!) can be used in any industry and any country.

The drivers for innovation, the support processes that need to be put in

place and any other strategic concept are all transferable. What is not always transferable is the local detail e.g. how do you manage knowledge locally, impart ideas to those from a different culture or even run training courses. I always maintain that the greatest experts in any industry are the company themselves. They have the knowledge, they need a model. Why pay huge fees to buy often contradictory advice from a company or consultant that claims to have industry specific knowledge.

So buy my model please, it works! But what are the most common local differences you ask? Here is a short and definitely not a definitive list:

- Time - Arab cultures have a very different model of time whilst many Latin American, Mediterranean and Far Eastern cultures are less precise than in the UK.
- Risk - the same cultures who are less precise may also tend to be less risk averse and more playful.
- Ideas - some cultures readily adopt well formed ideas and in some you will need to plant seeds and let them grow.
- Business etiquette - no matter how creative you are, certain norms will need to be followed, not because they are part of business but because they are social and in many cultures business/social boundaries are blurred.
- Groups - there are varying expectations as to how groups or teams form, what their purposes are and what is expected by/from them.

The list is not exhaustive and is based on my dealings with other cultures in the fields of creativity and innovation only. For in depth advice please consult an expert in your chosen culture.

Slow Innovation

Around fifteen years ago, the Italian journalist Carlo Petrini was strolling past a new MacDonald's franchise in the centre of Rome and launched a major eating revolution. He paused and said: If this is fast food, why not have slow food? There have been other 'slow' movements such as 'slow education'.

In the business world there is huge pressure to deliver results 'fast', but do the changes we make, the consultants we employ, and the money we spend create a lasting difference to our businesses? We seem to make a constant stream of



satisficing decisions that just get us by, until the next crisis that is.

In much the same way as the other 'slow' movements, I began thinking about 'slow innovation'. Innovation has become a buzzword, if we just come up with some good ideas and do some market research then we are bound to get some new products into the market and ensure the future success of our organisation - right? Not necessarily.

What we have created, with our knee jerk reactions, is the fast business, driven by objectives that have not been thought through. What seems to matter is the outcome, not the process. In our quest to achieve a short term goal we have neglected the systems that should be put in place to properly manage ideas, to 'un manage' our employees, to create the right culture, ensure that our money is spent wisely and create a long term programme that will avoid a constant stream of (expensive) knee jerk interventions. As with fast food, these events are not pleasurable for our shareholders or staff. We will suffer from obesity (consultant overload), additives (things we do not need), hypertension (change fatigue) and of course an empty wallet. This is Taylor's scientific management applied in the wrong context.

The route to slow innovation means savouring the flavours of diversity and learning, blending ideas and know how and ultimately becoming self sufficient. In our fast consumer society we can throw away what we grow tired of or find not to our taste. We cannot throw away our businesses and start again. Slow Innovation, the sustainable way, is surely a better way to create the business of the future.

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