

News and Views on Creativity and Innovation

creative4business

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Dear Dave,

Here is an opportunity to air alternative suggestions that might help or even solve some of our issues. Although called 'Dear Dave' because of our Prime Minister you can send your suggestions for your own country.

OK Dave, you save £320m by shutting Remploy. What next? Why not take a large wodge of that money as seed funding for a new start-up? You could do that every year, create a new company AND save some money. How about it?

Please send in your suggestions and they will be published in future editions along with any other ideas that we stumble across.

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the final edition of **Innovation Matters** for 2012. We will be back in your Inbox in February after a short break.

This month we have a **New Year's Resolution** for you. Throw off your old ways and do some original thinking. **Think differently** about **working with others**. Remember you do not have to like them, just value their thinking ability. And finally, we have some ways in which you can get to grips with **managing creativity** within your organisation.

A new keynote is being developed and will see its first airing in January. So if you think '**Zen and the Art of Creativity**' might be of interest to your organisation then please get in touch. Also note that there is currently a New Year offer on workshops. Just £100 plus expenses for a half day workshop for up to 15 people. Santa could not do better! Please see our website or get in touch if you would like to take advantage of this offer.

Don't forget that previous issues of Innovation Matters can be viewed by visiting our website and navigating to the [archives](#) page.

Lastly I would like to wish all readers, clients and colleagues a peaceful and restful festive season and a prosperous New Year.

Derek Cheshire



New Year's Resolution - Set Out To Break Mindsets

Most, if not all of us have either a fixed way of doing things or a fixed way of thinking about things. These fixed patterns are known as mindsets and they can severely limit our actions in both business and private life.

Imagine that you take the same route each day when you walk to your place of work. Each day you buy the same newspaper and the same sandwich for lunch. Over time you begin to get a little fed up with your choice of sandwich and the newspaper does not seem to engage you as it once did. If you had turned right at the end of your road instead of left you would have been introduced 6 months ago to a brand new shop that had a larger stock of newspapers and magazines and also a more impressive selection of sandwiches, filled rolls, cakes (and salads for the health conscious). Unless a friend or colleague tells you of this new opportunity you will remain blissfully unaware of it. Just think of the new opportunities and new faces if you varied your walk to work on a weekly basis!



So what has this got to do with your business? Well take a long look at yourself and the people that you work with. Do you advertise in the same way all of the time? Do you make exactly the same products every day? Do you try anything different at all to try and improve your business or do you do the same as you have always done? A simple change of perspective or attitude may be all that is required. Even if your business is successful, you would be interested in new business opportunities, wouldn't you?

The effects of mindsets can be greatly exaggerated when working alone and we all need to make an effort to overcome this. Note that changes you make in your working life will affect your private life and vice versa. Why not try out one of these suggestions?

1. Develop a broad range of interests. The richer your experiences, the wider the range of possibilities open to you. If you like chess then try bungee jumping, if you go hang gliding then try model railways. Read books by different authors.
2. Become aware of your own blind spots - the things you habitually do not think about and the techniques that you do not use. Then work out ways of challenging them.
3. Try out different perspectives, including stepping into the shoes of every important stakeholder your business has no matter how extreme their views. Extreme views can give you useful, if exaggerated, insights. Remember you are not trying to like the person, just view the world through their eyes. All too often we ignore the views of non-experts who can often help us spot things we might ordinarily miss (a process called Naïve Enquiry. Try this one with children if you can, it can be very enlightening).
4. Try different techniques. If you always stick to favourite approaches, gaps will accumulate in your thinking. When you have read most of this material you will find that one or two ideas will catch your eye and become favourites. There is nothing wrong with having something to hand that works but you do need to try an alternative once in a while.
5. Try different mental modes: being rational, being intuitive, using drawing etc. Try a visualisation or perhaps a cartoon storyboard to express your thoughts.
6. Do you really have to work alone? It is often said that we need people to bounce ideas off and this is very true. Even if you do have to work alone, find yourself a group of 3 or 4 trusted friends who can give you sound advice and act as sounding boards. There is no need to pay them except perhaps for a small gift or a meal at a restaurant, whatever is most appropriate.

Tip: Working With Others



When working with others it is useful to work with as wide a variety of individuals as possible. You may not value the knowledge held by these people but it is not their knowledge that we wish to tap into - it is their thinking. Think of this exercise as harnessing the computing power of a number of networked laptops rather than simply examining the contents of their hard drives. Remember, the views of non-experts should be as welcome as those of experts.

Learning To Manage Creativity

Embracing Creativity or running a creative thinking session is not unlike running a theatrical performance - it needs both stage management and direction.

Such activities can of course vary widely in scale. You may be working on your own; you may be chatting informally with one or two others; you may be running a classic small-group brainstorming session or even working with large groups. In all cases you must pay attention to the following components.

People - the 'cast' of the drama

If you have the luxury of choosing people to work with then this may present a dilemma. On the one hand, you want as much diversity as possible, because that is where new insights and connections will come from.

On the other hand, they must work well together, because creative work requires a high level of personal openness and risk taking, and a lot of interaction.

If possible you should:

- Choose people who have the skills to manage high levels of difference comfortably.
- Design sessions/meetings so that they are less sensitive to the adverse effects of large interpersonal differences.
- Facilitate the session in such a way that you 'manage' adverse effects as (or before) they emerge.
- Choose people who can tolerate wide levels of difference
- Choose people who are compatible temperamentally, but differ widely in their area of expertise

People are less likely to be 'thrown' by minor interpersonal clashes if they have a reasonably solid personality, a degree of self-awareness, and a good sense of humour. Avoid big status differences, unless it is very clear that there are excellent, pre-existing, levels of trust between the people involved.

Have fun! Laughter and a light touch can defuse many tensions and manage the expectations of participants so that they know this will be a somewhat 'special' event, with unusual people. Remember, it is usually easier for people to feel uninhibited and take risks with a group they will not see again.



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