

News on Creativity and Innovation related topics

June 2008

creative4business

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the June 2008 edition of Innovation Matters, the third edition of the year. With uncertainty in the World Economy it is those businesses that can most accurately predict the future that are most likely to survive.

The **Future Is Bright** takes a look at why we might wish to take a look into the future and how we can actually do this. Next we show you how you can **solve** work related **issues** whilst on holiday - **without lifting a finger!** There is also a light hearted look at **office speak**, you can even download your own office-speak bingo card and see how many of the phrases your boss and colleagues use!

Finally there is light at the end of the tunnel for UK readers who might be maxed out on their **credit cards** or having issues with **loan** providers and **mortgage** lenders.

Happy reading

Derek Cheshire

News



New this month is our brand new **Futures** programme. If you need to craft strategies that go forward 5, 10 or even 25 years into the future then we would like to talk to you about Futures. [Contact us](#) to find out more.

If you or your organisation is looking for a speaker we offer a range of Innovation related topics including **Intelligent Growth - success on a budget**, **The shape of the innovative organisation** and **The Future's Bright**. [Contact us](#) to find out more and make a booking.

There have also been some minor updates to our website, including a [newsletter archive](#) and some of your most [frequently asked questions](#). Why not take a look?

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.

The future's bright ...

You might have seen this article syndicated elsewhere recently. This is the full article so keep reading until the end.

The best way to ensure that your business not only survives, but thrives, is to know what the future holds. Many people profess to do this already but what is it exactly that they are doing? From existing management information you might be able to predict the amount of resources required (both human and material) as well as the features of your competitive environment. How far in the future can you do this without resorting to sticking a wetted finger into the air? The answer is probably less than 12 months.

The question is, how far can we look into the **future** and with what **certainty**? The answer is anything from 5 to 30 years is possible, and that would certainly help with crafting strategy and changing the direction of even the largest multi national business if this is required. But how?



Most people are familiar with the passage of a ship on the ocean that leaves a wake behind. By examining the wake and knowing how much time has passed, one or more experts could tell you something about the ship, its speed and course. Now imagine that you are at the tail end of the wake but you are in the present, the ship is in the future and not visible to you. If you could pick up all of the bits of information that are present, look at the patterns, and have access to experts then it is possible to gain sufficient information to predict the future for your company.

Predicting the future has developed into a whole new topic known as ... **Futures**. Most gurus will use prediction, based on facts, certainty and giving you answers. It sounds safe but its usefulness over time is limited and it does not deal with the uncertainty of the future. Futures uses a degree of imagination, stories (or scenarios) and a whole lot of questions to rigorously examine the future and it can look decades ahead.

Businesses might wish to use futures to quantify risks and opportunities, craft strategies, inform investment decisions and fuel their innovation programmes. Government and other public sector bodies have broadly similar aims - creating policies, identifying areas for intervention, investment and education needs.

The first stage of a Future's programme is a huge information gathering exercise (remember the analogy of a ship's wake, we need all of this information). At the same time there needs to be some degree of focus. We cannot just generate the answer to the question 'What does the future look like?' A more reasonable question might be 'What does the market for personal computers look like in 2020?' or 'What will the requirements for transport infrastructure in Wales be in 2025?'

Once these areas have been identified we then begin to look at the drivers that affect these areas and existing trends that are already apparent. We also look a little further afield and scan the time horizon as far ahead as we can. All the time we gather information, taking care not to filter it too much as the 'signals' that we are looking for easily get lost in the 'noise' and we never know at the start how much weight (or credibility) to attribute to the information we are gathering.

At this point we have an idea of what we wish to look at and the various factors that might affect it. Now we add the questions, what if oil prices trebled or the population halved, working through a number of scenarios and seeing how this changes the future. Then we throw in the wildcards, who predicted 9/11 in the USA or the bombings in London? Who foresaw the so called credit crunch?

And how can we make this tangible at the end of the exercise? There are two main ways of examining strategy, observing the future from the present and working out how to get there and the most powerful version which is to look back towards the present from the future and describing how we got here. This is where our storytelling skills come into their own and we generate buy in.

We can predict the future **up to 30 years ahead** in order to inform strategy making and investment decisions for public and private sector bodies by using:

- Information from expert groups
- Widely available information
- A number of carefully chosen scenarios
- Both existing knowledge and by introducing wildcards
- Storytelling and other creative techniques to facilitate information gathering and generating buy in.

If you would like to know more about how you can run your **own Futures programme** then [please contact us](#) now.



Solving your problems whilst on holiday

Just think for a moment about your current lifestyle, well everyone's really. We seem to have no time to wash the car, pick up the kids, go to the gym, cut the grass. And so the list goes on. Well in a way I am going to compound that but make it easier for you. You are going away on holiday soon and are keen to get away from all of those business problems, right? What if I suggested that they could be solved by the time you got back from holidays and all without you having to consciously do anything apart from soak up the sun and drink ice cold pina colodas?

Well here's how. You may have heard of the right/left brain model, if not here is a recap. Your left brain is logical and handles logical stuff like numbers etc but it also filters ideas (no you can't do it that way stupid). Your right brain is creative and will explore anything given the chance. To get your brain working while you are away, simply get right into your problem(s), understand every nuance and then distract your left brain by doing something such as - going on holiday. Some solutions may leap out at you and some may leak out on your return, but something will happen.

If you are feeling even more creative then why not use random stimulation whilst on holiday. This technique makes use of odd or wacky stimuli. If you are going away then the chances are you will see some unusual things that could trigger good ideas. How could that coconut help you at work, or that starfish, or that ice cream?

Office speak, has it gone too far?

*at the end
of the day*

Recently there was a great article published on the BBC website which collated the top 50 office speak phrases that we love to hate (or hate to love). They were all emailed in by real people. Here are my five favourites in reverse order:

1. "At a large media company where I once worked, the head of human resources - itself a weaselly neologism for personnel - told us that she would be **cascading down** new information to staff. What she meant was she was going to send them a memo. It was one of the reasons I resigned - that, and the fact that the chief exec persisted on referring to the company as a **really cool train set**."
2. "The latest that's stuck in my head is **we are still optimistic things will feed through the sales and delivery pipeline** (ie: we actually haven't sold anything to anyone yet but maybe we will one day)."
3. "I work in one of those humble call centres for a bank. Apparently, what we're doing at the moment is **sprinkling our magic along the way**. It's a call centre, not Hogwarts."
4. "Business speak even supersedes itself and does so with silliness, the shorthand for quick win is now **low hanging fruit**."
5. "**Incentivise** is the one that does it for me."

Don't forget there are another 45 [here](#)! You can also download the [office speak bingo card](#) to record which phrases your boss and colleagues use.



Review your financial woes - creatively

In the current financial climate there are many people who have **credit card** balances higher than they would like or who are experiencing the squeeze with continuing **mortgage** or other **secured loan** payments. Those readers who have started a business using such finance will be anxious too. Can you do anything about it though?

There are some courses of action that can be taken without recourse to back street loan sharks. One method is of particular interest since the company concerned used a series of creative techniques without even realising it. Compliance with Ministry of Justice regulations forbid the disclosure of further information here. If you would like to **know more** then [please get in contact](#).

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