

News on Creativity and Innovation related topics

creative⁴business

June 2010

In This Issue ...

Fun stuff

Innovation 2010

Keep Your Eyes Open

Psst - Wanna Avoid Being Creative?

Quick Links

Fun stuff

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the June edition of **Innovation Matters**, the fifth of 2010.

Since we have seen political and economic upheaval recently in the UK, Spain, Portugal and Greece, this quote from **Richard Feynman** seems topical. It is also an excellent example of re framing in order to sell a concept or to obtain good PR as opposed to actually solving a problem.

"There are 10^{11} stars in the galaxy. That used to be a huge number. But it's only a hundred billion. It's less than the national deficit! We used to call them astronomical numbers. Now we should call them economical numbers."

This month **News** has been replaced by **Fun Stuff**. It is entertaining, but there are some serious learning points too. The first of this month's articles summarises the **Boston Consulting Group's** recent report **Innovation 2010**. Next comes a real story about the importance of information gathering throughout the whole business, and then a light hearted look at how to be as dull as



Are you familiar with the band OK Go? If not, have a look at the YouTube videos for the tracks [Here It Goes Again](#) and [This Too Shall Pass](#). An enormous amount of planning was needed in addition to the energy and creativity. You should bear this in mind with your own Innovation efforts.

If you want something else to watch why not see Derek's interview for [GuruView.tv](#)? To take a look [click here](#).

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

ditchwater, and **avoid being creative**.

Once again, if you have missed previous editions of Innovation Matters you can find them in our [newsletter archive](#).

As always, your thoughts and feedback are welcome.

Happy reading,

Derek Cheshire

Innovation 2010

Innovation 2010 is the title of a report published by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in April regarding the state of Innovation globally. There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn, but it is heartening to see that after a cautious 2009, companies are committing once more to pursuing Innovation during 2010.

Innovation is now a top three priority for 72% of respondents to the BCG survey, the highest figure since the survey was first introduced seven years ago. In addition, 84% of respondents consider Innovation an important or extremely important lever for reaping the benefits of an economic recovery. Companies are backing up their statements with hard cash too as 61% of companies plan to boost spending on Innovation and 26% plan to increase spending by more than 10%.

Executives cite the following as the major factors that are reducing the return on their Innovation spend:

- Risk averse corporate culture
- Lengthy product development cycles
- Poor Innovation measurement

For a while we have been saying that there is the possibility of a new world order in Innovation and survey respondents also echoed this. Although Apple and Google top the list of most innovative companies less than half of those surveyed believe that US companies will remain the most innovative over the next 5 years.

If we look at the first-time entrants to the most innovative list, all but one come from outside the US. One topical observation relates to the energy sector. Here BP rank number one and Exxon Mobil rank number four!

So what are the implications for senior executives this year?

- Improving your innovation efforts this year are key. You have survived the recession, you must now beat

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the others that have done so.

- If you don't show a decent return on your innovation programme then someone will cut back on your funding eventually or find someone who can improve return.
- Your top team needs to be more 'holistic', embracing rather than merely supporting Innovation.
- You must keep looking over your shoulder. You might have a head start if you are based in a developing country but there are others who can run faster.

If you would like to find more about how to improve your Innovation prospects please [get in touch](#).



Keep Your Eyes Open

This is a story about a lady (lets call her Mary) who works in the First Class Lounge at Cardiff Central railway station. If you have visited the lounge you will know the lady in question.

On entering the lounge there is a comfortable, but not formal, atmosphere and your eye cannot help but see an enormous aerial photograph of the city. The caption at the bottom reads "Cardiff's best ambassador 2009". One often sees certificates and 'thank you' letters from charities mentioning sums of £100 or so, but those lining the walls here are for amounts in 4 figures. Clearly there is something going on here.

Regular customers are greeted by name and their favourite drink poured for them, with stories exchanged. Clearly this is no ordinary employee (have you travelled by First Great Western trains recently?).

With my freshly brewed coffee and neatly folded newspaper in my possession I sit back and eavesdrop on a number of conversations. It appears that the lounge is used as a waiting area for hotel guests who check out of their hotels early and still wish to browse the nearby shops. One passenger stays with the luggage and the rest shop. This obviously causes a problem.

Mary has already sorted this one out! What is needed is a left luggage office, perhaps something can be arranged together with the hotels? After all, luggage cannot be left without security scans and a scanner would be expensive. It appears that Mary is a very able intelligence gathering machine and this is not the only suggestion that she has.

What happens next? To be honest I do not know but let us consider two possibilities:

1. The lounge is frequented by managers who like to wait for their trains in comfort. They listen to Mary who is closer to the customers than they are and go away to work out the potential benefits/impact.
2. The lounge is frequented by managers who know everything about running a company. They do not need information from employees at the bottom of the company in order to make good business decisions.

Which of the above is closest to your situation? Which is the best for the company?

Any employee at any level might be in a position to gather information whether they are a receptionist or a delivery driver. You might need to filter large amounts of data but you must keep your eyes open or risk missing potential opportunities or even threats to your business.

Psst - Wanna Avoid Being Creative?

There are many lists of how to do this and that, 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.

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