

News on Creativity and Innovation related topics

creative4business

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the September edition of **Innovation Matters**, the eighth of 2010. Did you have a good vacation?

This month there are three great articles plus a bonus article on the effect of **bullying** on **Creativity** that can only be downloaded via the [resources](#) page on our website.

This month's first article Six Steps To Turn Luck Into Profit takes a look on how you can be prepared to **capitalise on good ideas** that suddenly come your way.

Next we take a look at how changing perspective can help find a way forward when you get stuck in a **difficult situation** or with a seemingly **impossible problem**.

Finally there is a look at how we try to **impose existing rules** on **new situations** and how that might affect the ways in which organisations embrace Creativity.



Last month I gave you advanced notice of this event. Details and venue have been confirmed. The place to be is the **Street Cafe** at the **UWE Campus**, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol on **September 22nd**. Come and find out all about **Bloodhound SSC**, the British attempt to increase the World land Speed record to over 1000mph. Visit the [Assoc of MBAs website](#) to book or reply to this newsletter to find out more.

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 our [newsletter archive](#).

As always, your thoughts and feedback are welcome.

Happy reading,

Derek Cheshire



Six Steps To Turn Luck Into Profit

This article carries on from last month's feature on Serendipity. If you missed the article [read it here](#).

Ensure that the **goals** of your business are aligned with the values, interests and actions of your employees. The Japan Railways worker was all for removing water, he just had a different solution for doing it and he knew that his idea would be taken seriously.



Encourage **initiative**. Allow employees to pick problems that they are interested in, which in turn increases intrinsic motivation. Employees will put in extra effort or time if they feel it is worth it.

Unofficial activity (or skunk works) occurs in the absence of direct official support. When an idea is new to a company there is often resistance. Unofficial activity gives ideas a safe breeding ground where they have the chance to develop. Official recognition can raise all kinds of barriers to creativity when managers plan and scrutinise every step. When employees are free to experiment beyond the boundaries of their job descriptions, this is often the time for unexpected connections.

A **serendipitous discovery** is one made by accident in the presence of insight. Creativity often involves making connections between things that may seem unconnected. The more obscure the connection, the greater the role for the unexpected. With insight we help bridge the gap, we do not need to leap quite so far. An excellent example of this was the discovery of penicillin.

Use **diverse stimuli**. A stimulus either provides fresh insight into something a person has already set out to do, or it provokes an entirely new course of action. We must remember that it is hard (even impossible) to predict how individuals react to new stimuli. So once again we must expect the unexpected but a word of caution, mass applications of stimuli have a limited effect. Bringing people together to share experiences of such stimuli is much more beneficial.

Develop a **soft infrastructure**. For corporate creativity official channels of communication are of limited use. We need networks where knowledge and intuition can slosh about, crossing departmental and functional boundaries. Good

examples are those coffee machine or water cooler moments. Smaller companies seem to be able to create or foster such networks but larger companies have difficulty. The larger the company, the more likely that the components of creativity are present somewhere in it, but the less likely they will be brought together without some help.



It's All About Perspective

As Albert Einstein noted, a problem cannot be solved within the same frame of reference in which it was created. This does not mean that we have to employ Einstein's methods and shift ourselves into outer space or become time travellers, it simply means that our problem must be reframed or looked at in a new way. You can get someone else to look at your problem or just change your own perspective.

My good friend Gerardo Porras, based in Mexico, created a very useful metaphor for this very situation. We are inside our house looking out and what we see is governed by the shape of the window and the colour of the glass. To add to this metaphor, our view through the window is also governed by the laws of physics, we can only see what is in our line of sight so to look in a different direction we must choose a new window.

We could of course leave our 'house' and take in all of the scenery by turning around and looking in every direction. If we were exploring then that is exactly what we would do, but within organisations we need to make decisions and too much information can make those decisions difficult to take. So whilst we might need to change the way we look at a problem in an organisation, generating too many options or business ideas may be unhelpful.

So how can we change our perspective in a simple way? There are many creative techniques that you can use, many of which are known by different names but you can use the some of the approaches below:

- Random stimulation - introduce a random or bizarre objector thought which will give your brain a shock (what happens if I paint it yellow?)
- Experience the problem - create a model and walk around inside it

- Look at the problem boundaries and then change them or blur them
- Increase or decrease the amount of knowledge available - introduce your problem to older people or even children

Once you get the idea, you can soon work out your own ways to change your perspective.

Creativity, Re-writing Your Rulebook

Recently I encountered a very interesting take on the idea of rules whilst watching Stephen Tomkinson's Australian balloon adventure on ITV1. In Melbourne there is a road called Hosier Lane where many graffiti artists work. The mere thought of graffiti signals anarchy to most people or perhaps fond memories of Banksy.



Hosier Lane is completely covered in graffiti and it was intriguing to note that there are 'rules' that govern the whole process of applying graffiti. First of all there are real regulations about who can actually spray paint (you need a license), what types of paint you can use etc. then there are the unwritten rules. For instance, who decides when it is allowable to paint over existing graffiti?

It seems that the rules make themselves. If a work is greatly admired then it will survive for a long time, if not and other tags or drawings encroach on it then that is the signal for some urban redecoration. It is also allowable for existing works to be enhanced by adding to them, perhaps a butterfly tastefully applied.

Now let us step back in time and imagine what sort of discussions took place when the graffiti was first put there. All of the existing rules would have been applied in rapid succession to see if a) there was an applicable rule b) it was possible to ban/remove graffiti if the need arose. I can imagine that various regulations covering hazardous substances (paint), planning, safety (crowd control, police) were pored over before someone realised that Hosier Lane was actually a tourist attraction.

So if this street was a street artist's canvas, what rules can/should be applied? The answer is of course ones that apply to the graffiti itself and those who put it there, subject if course to normal rules regarding decency and other the rights of others not to have graffiti in their street.

So when your organisation decides to embrace creative thinking you will most likely encounter new situations that you need to deal with. Don't be alarmed, just involve the appropriate people and do not try to make your existing rules fit, they will restrict your creative output.

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Creative Business Solutions | Brookside Cottage | Mill Lane | Corston | Malmesbury | SN16 0HH | United Kingdom

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