

creative4business

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Dear Dave

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Customer Service - Do You Deliver?

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.

The Olympics and Paralympics have shown that communication and imagination can encourage mass participation. Will you learn from this at all?

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 September edition of **Innovation Matters**. For most it is back to the grindstone after a break, even if the sun has not been shining much here in the UK.

Creative HQ has now relocated to Sheffield although I am still loitering around South Wales. Other changes include a switch to a new server for webhosting and email. This should mean faster access to the website. Please also note the new landline number +44 (0)114 339 2802. All contact details can of course be found on our [website](#).

This month we talk a look at **The Workplace of Tomorrow**, how you might get **Creative Fit** and have a brief rant about **poor customer service**.

If you would like any help or advice in adopting Creativity or Innovation in your organisation please do get in touch.

Don't forget that you can also take a look at previous issues of Innovation Matters by visiting our website and navigating to the [archives](#) page.

Happy Reading,

Derek Cheshire



The Workplace of Tomorrow

Despite all of the predictions of a futuristic workplace, we all seem to inhabit vastly different offices and factories. So will there ever be a workplace where everything is ideal? The answer is probably not because of the compromises that must exist, but it is likely to offer flexibility and empowerment to the people that work within it. Such a place must try to accommodate the requirements of the business (usually in line with commercial stakeholders) and those of employees (and social stakeholders).

These fall into 3 main areas:

1. The organisation, Leaders and Managers
2. Employees
3. Working environment

Leaders and Managers will find their roles changing, they will be the 'senior citizens' of the organisation and will no longer exert influence through power and hierarchies. Influence will be through their experience, knowledge, wisdom and vision for the future. These senior citizens may very well have portfolio careers (a term used often by Charles Handy) and work for more than one organisation. They will exert influence but with less cost than the full time management of old.

Employees are the citizens, still able to contribute knowledge and experience but not to such an extent. Contracts of employment may very well be zero hour i.e. employees will not be contracted for a minimum period of employment per week. Instead, their efforts will be summoned on demand. Perhaps 30 hours one week and 40 the next (or none). This will give businesses flexibility but could also leave employees some freedom to create valuable IPR in their time off as a trade off for the new contracts.

The working environment is perhaps the thing that we are currently closest to. Efficiency dictates some sort of hot desking, perhaps hot desking 'with feeling' so that the immediate working environment is not sanitised, and can be decorated or personalised. With a distributed workforce, a certain amount of sickness absence and site visits, we no longer need the amount of office space that we did in the past. Making such environments 'modular' also means that we can add or subtract capacity easily.

The name of the game in the future is compromise and flexibility on the part of all parties.



Getting Your Organisation Creative Fit

Did you think that this article would be about creative techniques and training courses? That would be too simple!

First of all let us think about training to be an athlete. We have to put in lots of effort - hours on a bike, in a boat or maybe the gym. Then we have different types of training where we train for intervals and have short breaks or perhaps we do something completely different. Finally we might think about tapering our training before a major competition. Most coaches will tell you that to get the best out of our bodies we need to push them hard and then rest. If we do not push hard we cannot improve, and if we do not rest we injure ourselves.

It is exactly the same with our own organisations. If we wish to embrace creativity and reap the benefits then we cannot pull out our book of techniques once in a while, we need to use them so that they

become second nature. We also need to work hard i.e. practise on real problems not trivial issues in workshops and have regular breaks. If we use creativity all of the time then it ceases to be creative. But what about tapering before that big event? Well in the calm before the storm we get ourselves organised. We ensure we have the right equipment (pens, flip charts etc.), right environment, and right people so that when we get to the starting line we are ready to go.

And if you really wish to push the point, British sprinter Linford Christie always said that you 'start on the B of the Bang'. For us this means getting ahead of our competitors.

Customer Service - Do You Deliver?

My area of experience is creativity and alternative thinking, not customer service. However, I was inspired (or perhaps driven) to put pen to paper after recent experiences with several large organisations here in the UK. I will not name them directly but the two worst offenders provide my telephone and banking services.



Large organisations just want to give us what they think we want or they might be so arrogant as to be saying "this is what you are going to get". Recently I wanted answers to some questions regarding banking so I checked the company's website for possible answers and after determining that the answers were not there I used the secure messaging system to ask my questions. I did this 4 times and each time the reply was a section of the help text from their website that had been cut and pasted into the response that had been sent to me.

When trying to contact my telephone company I tried 5 times via telephone and their chat service to resolve an issue. Each time I was told what they thought I wanted to hear i.e. you will get xxx within 14 days . They seemed to see themselves as an information service, relaying how they were told the system should behave, but not actually being able to deal with exceptions.

In most cases it is not actually the fault of the individuals providing the service, it is the actual system that needs revamping. Use a little creative thinking guys, ask why I might be emailing or calling you. It is usually because my query is technical or non standard and I want some real help. So why employ knowledgeable people as supervisors rather than let them answer the phone. Just think, if you answered your queries first time, you would ultimately cut down the number of calls to your call centres.

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Creative Business Solutions | 6 Abbeydale Hall | Abbeydale Road South | Dore | Sheffield | S17 3LJ | United Kingdom