



Just A Moment...
Business Commentary

Creativity and Innovation

by Leon A. Enriquez

The business landscape is in constant flux. One word seems to characterise and qualify the players on the stage – competition – and the pace is intense and gruelling. Pareto’s 80:20 rule seems to be the determinant law that separates the winners from the losers.

In business, the loser dies because the life-blood or capital is exhausted well before replenishment can take place. In other words, you spend more money than you can even earn! And then, you bleed to death – and not surprisingly, “Another one bites the dust!” to quote the familiar song.

To succeed in business, you need both creativity and innovation.

As human beings, we are all endowed instinctively, and know that creativity at work is vital. Consider, if you let creativity meet the expectations of the day – it becomes innovation – and innovation spurs growth. Growth means a positive pull toward business success.

So, ultimately, all our business future hedges on a simple idea – it depends on our ability to be creative at work.

Yes, we have all been bombarded with countless messages demanding the priority for these two things – innovation and creativity. So many sources have drilled into our tired minds why we need to be so, e.g., the CEO, business owner, leader, boss, and not forgetting the magazines, books, newspapers and what-nots!

This constant drumming in our now deaf ears, is like stale and rancid music from a distorted source – pure noise that is no longer audible – despite the justifiable premise. What’s missing is really the practical follow-through!



“What does it mean to be creative? How do you transform creativity into innovation? To do so fruitfully, we need to first understand what it means to each person as an individual with inherent curiosity, and creativity as part of what we are as humans. Yes, everyone of us is innately creative. That’s a proven, scientific fact!” said Dr. David Freemantle, author of *The Stimulus Factor* and *What Customers Like About You*.

Put another way, creativity is a behaviour. And innovation is a process. Notice that they seem to be the same but mean quite different things. In reality, creativity becomes innovation when ideas become useful – and better still, commercially viable. In the business world, this happens when a product or service is launched, fulfills a need, and starts to make money.

Today, the business case for innovation is a universal fact – accepted as a means to an end. In recent post dot-com space, companies are struggling to become more innovative to enhance their competitive market positioning. We all recognise the joy and pride that comes from having a great idea, and making it happen.

It is our ability to create, and to make previously unseen connections which truly defines us as human beings. Yet, creativity is the greatest and most under-developed skill in business today. Why?

Dr. Janelle Barlow, author of *A Complaint Is A Gift* and *Emotional Value* puts it this way: “No where is creativity more critical as in such daunting times where we are pressured to approach our work with a steady stream of creative juices flowing – to solve the difficult problems that we encounter in the business arena!”

There are two worlds to business, namely, an analytical world, and a creative world. Most large organisations have both. Most have too much of the analytical or logical. This leaves less opportunity for creative behaviour to take root and grow.

Ironically, the more successful a company becomes, the more likely it loses touch with its entrepreneurial roots. Over time, you develop systems that end up beating the life out of creativity. No wonder innovation stops!



In the book *Sticky Wisdom – ‘How to Start a Creative Revolution at Work*, authored by the creative team at ?WHATIF! – a London-based consultancy that helps companies recapture their inventive spirit, they expound: “Failure to correctly focus, balance and navigate between the two worlds of ‘analysis’ and of ‘creativity’ – compromises business growth, undermines personal growth and job satisfaction, and reduces feelings of fulfillment through work. Without creative behaviour, we deny ourselves of what we really are: creative beings!”

Yes, we all come to work for money. But there’s much more to our basic motivation than money alone. Creativity and innovation can flourish only if we have a culture that works for both personal profit, and business success. This is a mindset that starts with the behaviour – a culture where creativity and innovation are valued and rewarded.

Or else, it’s merely lip service. And the consequences of management indifference are obvious to any fool!

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