

SOFIE SANDELL



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DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

HOW CREATIVITY IN BUSINESS
CAN PROPEL YOUR BRAND
& BOOST YOUR RESULTS

PRAISE BY SOFIE'S CLIENTS

"Sofie provided a Creativity Workshop for 40 staff from our psychological therapy service, which was full of experiential learning and was presented with warmth, curiosity and optimism. The content was based on sound psychological principles. We were shown how sometimes thinking patterns default and response styles can limit, rather than facilitate, creative thinking. As well as increasing our insight into the content and consequences of our thinking styles, we all stepped (not too far!) out of our comfort zones and had fun together as a team."

Dr Dale Huey AFBPsS, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, NHS

"Sofie's workshop was very effective in reinforcing the importance of creativity in business and clearly illustrated how vital creative thinking and innovation really is in producing results for long-term business success. Sofie is a superb communicator and motivator. She is an inspiring business leader who is a committed and passionate individual who genuinely cares about the success of what she is involved in and the people she is working with. She always goes the extra mile and gets people enthused and engaged in what she is doing."

Rene Mance, Computer Software Professional

"I found the workshop inspiring and it challenged some preconceptions I had about creativity and innovation. It also showed me how some companies are not after change, and this truly reflects in their behaviour and the way they don't invest in creative thinking ("yes but" people). It made me really think about the creative process and how to nurture new ideas. Companies looking for effective ways to encourage creativity in their staff should most definitely seek out Sofie and book one of her workshops."

Jessica Mo, Creative manager, Daydream studios

“Sofie is an inspiration to work with. I learnt so much by working with her, not least in terms of digital marketing — but also about the benefits of a positive attitude, believing in your product and working your socks off to share the good news about it!”

Grainne McGuinness, TV Producer/Director, Indee Productions

“Sofie has a wealth of knowledge in social media and digital marketing. She is patient, caring, reliable and very good at explaining how things can be done. She is supportive and always inspires me to do my best and make progress. She is an excellent coach.”

Mahin Driskill, Author

“Sofie is a charismatic, insightful and smart digital marketer. I brought her in to my team to test and set up new marketing techniques, which she took up with gusto. She is eager to learn and research the subject and shares findings with colleagues enthusiastically. She inspires people around her with her work ethos and her get up and go. She’s a pleasure to work with.”

Santa Marku, Head of Marketing, BSI Business Information

Sofie and I met via a mutual colleague. Her knowledge and expertise in digital media was evident from my first meeting with Sofie. We went on to deliver a joint event for Women Entrepreneurs titled: Boost Your Online Profile. Since then Sofie has given me an insight into social media, but more importantly the confident message to try and try again until I find my online voice. I would recommend Sofie to anyone looking for a personal digital media /social media coach.

Gurnam Selvarajah, Co-founder, Women Entrepreneurs

BONUS RESOURCES

I am sure you will enjoy reading this book.
On a regular basis I will update the bonus page
with extra business building and brand
development content.

To check out the resource page go to:
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Thank you to every single person I met and got to know when I was teaching and training people in digital strategies and creativity.

Also, a big thank you to all digital platforms where this book is available.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

This book is for people who are interested in learning more about the digital world, creativity and leadership, and how to use all three to move ideas forward to create a better world where ideas can grow and develop.

More and more digital opportunities are presenting themselves, and a leader intent on broadening their horizons should take advantage of all forms of digital media in combination with their creative talents.

We have many great opportunities to connect with each other around the globe and create prosperity and new solutions to problems around us. If you are not digitally oriented yet, I urge you to dare to be creative and find a way to learn more about the digital world, creativity and leadership. You never know if this could be the start of a new career and your next stream of income. Stay curious and keep on learning.

INTRODUCTION

A while ago I tweeted this: 'Social media is about people; embracing the way people connect. It's about sharing, helping and doing well!'

Do you agree with this statement?

Most of us have turned into global networkers by using social media and are connected to just about everyone on the planet. Whether you realise it or not, employers, colleagues and acquaintances we have just met are checking us out on Google. We all have an online profile. We are all connected through digital media. With digital media I mean information that can be transmitted in digitised format using the internet. It can be websites, podcasts, online videos, social media and so on.

This book is about why it makes sense to use our creative mindset and social media to enhance relationships, expand business borders and drive leadership. It will show you how you can bring creativity into your business when you explore digital opportunities.

By using the Digital Leadership and Creativity Leadership Principles that I present in this book, you will be more aware of how creativity works

and what you can do to make the most of the resources you have around you. You can start a blog and communicate with every other internet user in the world with just a few clicks. You can make your voice heard by using new platforms and communication tools, or you can improve how you use the digital tools you already have.

I've been involved with digital media and marketing for over ten years, and now I teach and train people in these subjects. If you want to learn, have fun and be more productive then the digital world is for you.

In 2007 I had a conversation with someone I admire as a leader. He said: 'All successful organisations must use the latest digital techniques. You'll learn new ways about how to make a bigger impact by doing that.' This short conversation made a huge impression on me and I started exploring new digital opportunities more and more.

You can use digital platforms to connect with people all over the globe. Your idea might be just what your market has been waiting years for.

Leaders are responsible for wealth creation wherever they are active. By this I don't simply mean that they accumulate a lot of money in the bank; they also make sure their employees, customers and the organisations around them are benefiting

from the work they do. By using the digital tools available, you can share your thoughts and ideas and inspire others to take action. Most digital tools can be used by anyone. They are democratic and available to both you and me.

I believe that organisations that aren't embracing digital media are missing out on the things they really want: the ability to make an impact, to create new opportunities, to achieve wealth, gain prestige and, most importantly, have the chance to become leaders who inspire others.

If you choose to stay outside digital media, you'll miss out on a lot of information. If you are in business and are not present in social media, your customers will think that you aren't interested in communicating with them. Missing out on this communication can have a detrimental effect.

It takes courage to use digital media well. By reading this book my hope is that you will dare to be creative and make the most of the digital world.

When we look around the corner at what's coming in the future, digital media should be on everybody's radar. If you're not there now, it's time for you to consider where to start. If you are using digital tools, it's time to step up and take control of them so that they are working harder for you.

Dare to be creative and use the digital tools that are there for you.

All the best and enjoy the book.

Sofie Sandell
London, UK

PART ONE

OUR DIGITAL WORLD

*“The chief enemy of creativity
is good sense.”*

Pablo Picasso

01 THE DIGITAL WORLD AT A GLANCE

***What do we mean when we talk about the
'digital world'?***

The digital world includes all websites, email and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Banking and other daily services have gone digital. TV is digital in most countries and all our mobile devices (tablets, notebooks and smartphones, for example) are digital. When we sign a petition online, we do it digitally instead of putting our name on paper.

We can vote online instead of going to a specific venue. Companies email us surveys to ask for our opinion. As a customer you can give online feedback if you are happy or unhappy about something.

We are using new technical platforms and solutions to help us in our lives. Our homes are becoming digital and we are receiving more and more information through digital channels. The digital world is helping us to communicate, exchange information and give our opinions. It encompasses a lot and is essentially here to make our lives easier.

KIDS GO DIGITAL

Our future will demand technical savvy and our children will use digital devices every day for the rest of their lives. Scary!

A friend of mine has a son who is four years old. He is very aware that his family doesn't have an iPad and he nags his parents on a daily basis to buy him one. Another friend's 18-month-old daughter knows how to find the photos on my iPhone. All the children that I've met in the past couple of years know how to play games on their parents' Smartphones and iPads. Children are growing up with digital tools around them constantly and these tools are here to stay.

THE NEW ERA

Digital media is also about sharing knowledge and facilitating access to knowledge. Everybody who has a computer or other similar device can get access to global knowledge. Experts in all kind of areas now freely give away their insights and discoveries to anyone who is interested. You can learn and develop your knowledge of almost any subject by searching for it online.

It is very easy to share opinions with others using digital and social media. It is possible to build a community of like-minded individuals that are active worldwide with the digital tools now available.

Things we did offline 20 years ago we now do online, and this is thanks to electronic communication. We find new friends, peers and supporters online. Many people that I first connected with online I now meet with face-to-face on a regular basis. The friendships that started digitally are just as much based on trust and honesty as any of my offline relationships, maybe even more so as trust is more easily lost in the digital world than outside of it.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA FORCE

Social media in its early days consisted of email, intranet, wikis and internal chat systems. You exchanged information with others, shared your thoughts and concerns, and you let others contribute to the discussion.

Today, social media has developed exponentially and there are endless opportunities to use it. We share our daily life with our friends and strangers over a variety of networks. We use new technologies to create groups and forums. Companies use social media to recruit new staff members and attract new clients/customers. We share our opinions on social networks and want our peers to join us. We also use it as a learning tool. Every day millions of new con-

nections are made online and it helps us to deepen the relationships we already have.

The thing is social media is not a one-way broadcasting system. It's a social two-way highway — the people around you can contact you and have a conversation with you, and vice versa. It is crucial for all organisations who want to build an online presence and want to be found online to utilise social media. It is the vehicle to engage with their connections and be at the front of their target audience's minds.

02 WHY SOCIAL NETWORKING ONLINE MATTERS

Social media and online networking works really well because, as human beings, we are naturally social. We want to interact with others, show our empathy for others and share the latest news. Every day we find out about news, events and birthdays with the help of the internet.

Today, in 2013, Facebook has over 1 billion accounts and Twitter has more than 500 million accounts. Every second, all over the world, people are interacting with each other and new people are joining new networks.

Sofie says: *“Online, long-distance friendships can often be as valuable as real life friendships. The power of words and encouragement is extraordinary!”*

HUMANS ARE SOCIAL

Interacting with others is a basic need for human beings. Our ability to network with one another, connecting with others outside our tribe, is one of the reasons why we have thrived as a species. That is why we are here today, why we have been able to progress through different phases of development.

Sofie says: *“Women are naturally better at communication, building relationships and connecting with people. Look at the top ten Twitter accounts; eight out of the ten are women. If you’re a man, open up your feminine side and become a better networker who can harness your connections more effectively.”*

If you look back in time to when we were hunters, we lived in caves. We lived in small groups and had to go out and hunt for food. Back then we could not supply food for more people than those in the tribe.

Then we came up with the idea of farming. We learnt how to harvest and how to put seed into the ground to grow. This gave us more food for more people and we could start to live in larger groups.

Our next big developmental step was industrialisation. This started in England about 200 years ago and then spread throughout the world. We were able to

create machines powered by steam and tools made of refined metals. The average income increased and the population started to grow. More people moved into towns and cities for work. The transport systems improved through the creation of better roads, trains and canals. It was easier to transport food and the cost of food was lower.

Today we are living in a new era known as the 'knowledge era'. In parts of the world there is plenty of food and you can learn and share new recipes with one click online. You can order your food online and get it delivered directly to your house. What part does social media play when new products and services are developed? What will historians say about the social media revolution? I believe that we also will refer to this current era as the social and mobile era. I wonder what the next step will be in how we obtain food. Maybe a 3D printer will print our food for us?

SOCIAL MEDIA ENABLES EMPATHY

It is deeply programmed into our DNA to show each other empathy — it's what makes us human. This is made easier with the help of social networks and digital media where we can 'like', comment and share information with each other. If the train station is closed, it will be mentioned on Twitter immediately. If you have something to celebrate, you can share it with all of your friends almost instantly.

We want to know what's going on and most of us want to engage with others and let other people know what we're up to and even how we're feeling. I once felt down and posted on Facebook: 'I'm in big need of a virtual hug...' That evening I received over 50 hugs and several messages, and, yes, it made me feel much better.

Sofie says: *"Praise your network in public. Most people love public compliments. Say thank you on a friend's Facebook wall or tweet someone who has done something you admire. Make it visible and show others that you are a fan of theirs and that you care about them."*

We have tools such as mobile phones and computers that make it very easy for us to expand our network and interact with more people. I think this is one of the reasons we can become so dependent on social media and online information. We can't help it; we're programmed to connect with others and we want to stay connected to the people we like.

SOCIAL PORTRAITS

You have access to several online social networks where you can show who you are and what your interests are by building an online profile. Your online profile is a blueprint of who you are and what you stand for.

I have read many people's descriptions of themselves on LinkedIn, Facebook and on their own websites. Some people represent themselves accurately and you get a true and honest picture of who they are by reading about them. Some online profiles that I've come across, however, are not a true and honest match with the person. One particular individual that I first connected with online told the world how fantastic he was at networking and how great he was at connecting people and helping them to become better networkers. When I met him in real life, he was a very shy person who had no charisma at all. He was not being honest about who he was. Don't make the same mistake he did.

If you want to make an impact online, you must be truthful about who you are and what you believe in. Your online personality should reflect the real you. Authenticity and integrity are integral to your dealings with others and thus success in your business and personal life.

DIGITAL LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE - THE POWER OF MANY DIGITAL VOICES

Currently in the UK (March 2013), there is a large campaign for equal marriage rights for homosexual couples, and two of the bigger lobbying organisations are Coalition for Equal Marriage (www.c4em.org.uk) and Out 4 Marriage (www.out4marriage.org). These organisations are working in a very smart and digital way. I signed the Coalition for Equal Marriage petition a while ago. First, I went onto their website and I signed the petition. Second, I was given the opportunity to send an email to my local Member of Parliament, which I did with a few clicks.

After I signed the petition, I did not expect to receive a reply from anyone. Two weeks later I was very surprised when I received a written and signed letter from my local MP in which she thanked me for showing an interest and said that they were working on the issue and will vote on equal marriage rights in 2013.

The third step on the Coalition for Equal Marriage petition website directs you to Out 4 Marriage's website where you are asked to send in a short video about why you support equal marriage rights.

The video campaign on YouTube is made up of videos in which people express their opinions on equal marriage rights. This is a smart and very simple idea. Anyone with a Smartphone or video camera can record a message and share their opinion with the world. It's about

participation and engagement. If the message is worth sharing, the campaign will get publicity. People love it when someone such as Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, expresses an opinion on equal marriage rights. When he sent in his video, it was in the press the next day. This is a clever and innovative way to show how an online digital campaign influences traditional media and gives it new content to write about. This is also a great example of how you can use social media to influence the government. Going online and using all the digital opportunities available is a powerful way of having an interactive dialogue with many different stakeholders: the gay community, organisations, individuals and celebrities all over the world.

Twenty years ago we would have signed paper petitions. The campaigners would have lobbied to be seen on TV and to appear in national newspapers. Now, with digital tools, we can start the campaign online and you as a citizen can help out and influence your local politicians, all with a few clicks of a mouse. The campaigners behind the Out 4 Marriage campaign have shown a deep understanding of social media as well as strong leadership and creativity.

If you have a cause you believe in and want to stand up for, start learning about how to use digital tools, develop your leadership skills and make an impact. You can help and inspire thousands of people and give them hope that change is possible.

03 OUR WORLD NEED LEADERS!

***Whose responsibility is it to lead, to create change,
to create wealth?***

There are thousands of books out there about leadership and I've been reading and studying the subject to try and dig into its secrets for a long time. I've also been a leader in numerous situations and have learnt from these experiences. I know what works, when people are engaged, and what prejudices we have concerning leadership.

My view is that leadership is for everyone. It is for businesses, politics, sports clubs, universities, schools and communities. It is for you. Everyone can make a difference and take on leadership responsibilities. We have leaders everywhere; leadership has nothing to do with titles. More and more people need to claim

their power as leaders and influence others despite having no formal authority.

We need leaders to create wealth. Our world needs strong leadership to help people to understand that the world around us can change, that there is hope. I believe that one of the reasons we exist is so that we can work together to create something better.

Leadership can take many forms: from fighting for democracy in a country that doesn't have it, to starting a new IT project that will improve the workflow in a company. We need leaders to create wealth — for everyone. We see leadership in every corner of society.

We have more opportunities than ever to create change and express our opinions. With digital media you can take action today and make an impact in the world around you. In this book I'll teach you a few tips about how to do this and I will also encourage you to dare to be creative. Using your creative mind while exploring the digital world will help you reach the next level. You can explore digital opportunities alone and you can also do it as a team.

We have entered the knowledge era and have new digital tools to use to share our message. What does leadership have to do with it? It means that you as a leader can influence even more people and make a bigger impact by sharing your message online. Many of the rules that apply in the real world also apply in

the online world. So, if it makes sense to do something offline, it is also likely to work online.

WHAT DO GOOD LEADERS DO?

What good leaders have in common is that they understand that they have to keep improving themselves. Life is a continuous process of development, and you're included in that. The world moves on and you have to follow suit. Even more than that, once you accept how the world is moving in this new era, you can lead the way in your sector. Being a leader means to lead the way.

What do leaders do?

04 YOUR DIGITAL WORLD IS CREATIVE!

For me creativity is a way to relate to problems and challenges in work and life. When you take the creative route you don't take the most obvious path from A to B. You choose a path that will involve something that is unfamiliar or new to you. Creativity is about trying out new things, new combinations. It is the combining of objects, people and challenges that would normally not be brought together. One example is a customer relationship game that I conduct in my workshops. I ask the participants to come up with some challenges they are struggling with. In the next step we add a new object into the discussion; it can be any random thing. Then they have to try to solve the problem with the help of the random object.

An example is when a group of people tried to come up with a new approach to a global product for the construction industry. They used random nouns from a dictionary and had to use them when coming up with ideas. In this case they used the words 'soldier', 'handbag' and 'paper'. This made them come up with a new solution that had nothing to do with their former ideas. It is great fun to look for a solution this way, and your mind is pushed to think outside normal patterns.

The environment in which you are active plays a big part in your creativity and how you can express it. If you are in an environment that discourages creativity, there is a risk that you are going to feel stuck and less creative. When people I meet say that they are not creative, I think that some of them define creativity as something that is reserved for authors, artists, children and people in creative jobs. But creativity is something that we all use when we work together with others, in all situations in life and at work.

When we use the first and most obvious solutions that come to mind when we solve a problem, we are quickly getting it over and done with. It sounds good to do it this way, but we are not stretching or developing ourselves. It can of course work well in some cases to take the easiest route, but it's not inviting any new thinking; you are using your old pattern. If you are trying to change something, you should look into different paths and stay open to new solutions.

In school we're taught to solve problems as quickly as possible, and if we do this well, we're praised, people clap their hands and we're given a gold star. This solution is quick, but it's not exploring any new perspectives and it's not necessarily the best solution. This forms a pattern where we continue to look at problems in this way. There is not much conscious reflection for creativity and innovation.

When you're being creative, you're not taking the easiest and most obvious route when you're going from A to B. You're using a new focus, seeing new opportunities; it is as if you're looking at the problem from another planet.

Here are two examples of creativity that you can use in your everyday life. If you are always looking in the same kind of shops when you are buying new clothes, take a day when you are only allowed to visit shops you have never been shopping in before. Next time you are cooking, why not try something you have never dared to cook before. You may well discover a great shop and cook an amazing meal when doing this.

This is what creativity means to me — allowing yourself and your team to explore new ideas and solutions. It's often when you make a mistake that you're innovating and creating a new way of thinking. By making a mistake when you are cooking a dish you never tried before, you can discover a new amazing dish. Creativity is pushing you forward.

“One of the great joys of life

PART TWO

DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

*“Creativity requires the courage
to let go of certainties.”*

Erich Fromm

05 THE LANGUAGE OF CREATIVITY

The language and words you use are powerful. They help you set directions and goals for yourself and the people you have around you. I would like to share some of my thoughts about how to foster creativity in your team and organisation. All organisations need to be innovative today and creativity is relatively cheap to invest in compared to recruiting new staff, IT, buildings and other assets.

If you do the same thing in business year after year, that may not satisfy your customers. When growing you need to be creative in developing new solutions that keep clients coming back for more. Creativity is a real business advantage and your clients notice this when working with you.

In most people's day jobs, creativity is about how you create something together as a team when work-

ing on a product or project. There are many critical aspects in managing teams and in this example I will focus on a digital team. When working I've observed that many teams are stuck in non-productive patterns. The result is that objectives are not met due to poor communication and lack of knowledge about sharing and supporting new ideas. Staff members are hesitant to be creative, and it is not the individuals' fault; it is a flaw in the culture and a lack of awareness of how creativity, ideas and innovation work.

If your organisation is looking into how it can grow and reach a new market, it is likely that the ideas that come up will involve digital media. It is with new technology that you can reach more people. If you are not aware about how to handle new ideas, you might kill new ideas by mistake.

STAKEHOLDERS TEND TO HAVE DIFFERENT INTERESTS AND AGENDAS

Looking at digital efforts from the human resources perspective, you have the content creators, web editors, e-commerce managers, sales people, business analysts, technical experts, developers, designers, image editors ... you name it!

There are numerous key functions to keep a great digital environment alive. Each team is also likely to have its own agenda about what is required and how it should be accomplished. Many digital teams I know find it challenging to achieve effective collaboration.

I was once working on a company's global website and Google's ability to find the website was compromised due to duplicated content on the company's local websites. This made it hard for Google to show an accurate result and the content, which was similar, was competing against each other. To change this took a lot of effort and people from several countries had to agree about how to move forward. Part of the solution was to design a better landing page, on which a user could choose the site for their country or region.

People have different ways of looking at problems and diverse views about what the priorities and solutions are. This often creates conflicts and these disagreements can drain the energy in the organisation.

DARE TO SAY YES TO IDEAS

To avoid the problem of

06

CREATIVITY IN BUSINESS - IMPROVISE OR BECOME INSTITUTIONALISED

Creativity and the ability to handle ideas nicely matters in business and will continue to differentiate the successful businesses from those that are left behind. Aren't organisations around the world creative? Yes, some organisations are, but when an organisation stops being creative they risk becoming a stuffy place where everything takes forever to get done.

Organisations that are left behind have a mindset of 'Yes, but...' and are not willing to learn anything new. New fresh ideas are not seen as a valuable asset and the organisation is not listening to their employees or their customers. They have become what I call 'institutionalised'.

The environment and culture you create for yourself and your team to work in will matter. When I'm teach-

ing creativity, one big part is how you're handling new ideas, and how you and your team, organisation and the whole system work together. I've heard many times, 'We have tried that before and it didn't work.' What this really means is that the people who did it then couldn't make it work. It has nothing to do with you and your abilities. If anyone is negative to your idea or suggestion, it means that they can't see how it will work. What they say is not the whole truth.

Sofie says: *"Successful creative people have identified who their biggest supporters are and they ask them for help and feedback on a regular basis."*

A former colleague stopped developing a new marketing campaign just because his boss pulled a funny face when he presented it. Could he be sure that his boss's face really meant that it was a bad idea? Or could he just have had something else on his mind? I suggested that he should ignore the funny face and continue developing the idea, which he did. After a few weeks in the incubator, he launched his marketing campaign and everybody he needed help from bought into the concept and his boss loved it.

Do you think in the same pattern as the person in the example above? Do you dare to change your own thinking pattern? Are you just slightly improving what you have? To be great and stand out today you need to do things differently. Doing things differently

means that you have to open up the creative resources you have both within you and your organisation.

*“Creativity is the ability to see relationships
where none exist.”*

Thomas Disch

YOU’RE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN CREATIVITY

You have your personal creativity, your team’s creativity, organisational creativity and the creativity in the ecosystem where you belong. Creativity takes many shapes and forms and is present in all stages in your life.

You’re personally responsible for feeding your creativity, and it’s wise to review what helps you get into a better flow. Do the exercise Setting Your Conditions for Creativity in Chapter 21 to get to know what works best for you. We are all different and there is no solution that fits all.

Team creativity can be tricky. This is the type of creativity that you and your team are most likely to work with. Most of us are not artists and writers working by ourselves. We’re part of a bigger system and we should learn how it works and how we can improve in it.

ASK YOURSELF:

- How do I handle new ideas in my team? Am I handling them in a nice way or am I killing many new ideas in their early stage?
- Can my organisation welcome creative thinking in a better way? Or am I stuck in old patterns?
- How is the system around me working? Do I need to tackle a structural problem with a creative solution?
- Is the system I'm working in holding me back and do I feel that it's impossible to innovate and bring new creative solutions to the table?

"I love how people in this business push themselves to know themselves, the world, and their creativity better."

Josh Lucas



The diagram on the previous page represents the creativity of the ecosystem in which you work. The first circle represents you. You have to learn about yourself and your personal creativity first; you are the focus of your own creativity. Then you have the team creativity — how well the team members are working creatively together. The third circle represents the organisation's awareness of how to make creativity flow better between the teams. The last circle is the ecosystem in which you are working. Is it the educational, retail, health care ecosystem you are active in? How open is the ecosystem to new ideas? How have the rules changed over the last 10 years in the ecosystem? Your team can be part of a very slow organisation, but you still have many opportunities to be creative and develop new ideas.

Sofie says: *“Creative leaders dare to improvise with the resources they have available. There’s no need to bring in external consultants to deliver a long report about what should be done just because no one in the team dares to say it. They trust that the people in their team and organisation will find a solution to the problems they face.”*

HOW TO HANDLE IDEAS NICELY

When you dare to

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WAKING UP THE INNOVATIVE SPIRIT - YOUR PERSONAL CREATIVITY

Creativity starts within you and in this chapter I am going to explain further what creativity is. We were all born with the gift to be creative; it was there inside us from the start. Unfortunately, as children grow and progress through school, much of this natural creativity is squashed. I remember school as being very task-oriented. If you were the first to finish your work, you were seen as a star, and you would sometimes be rewarded. There was comparison and competition going on, and we were always striving for something better — but better in the A to B way the teacher wanted, not better in a more creative way.

This way of studying and learning worked well for some students — those who were always encouraged when they performed well and according to what the teacher told us. But it was detrimental for the stu-

dents who didn't work as quickly. I often wanted to try a different route and this made me a bit slower. Some teachers got upset with students who experimented. I was one of these 'do it my way' students. In the end I learnt a lot, but my self-confidence was damaged and it did take time to understand that it was okay to do things the way that worked for me.

When we enter work-life as adults after many years in school environments, we're expected to be creative again. It can take some time and effort to get the creative flow moving again, as it did for me. If you feel a bit hesitant and unsure if you can be creative or not, I would like to assure you that EVERYONE can be creative! If anyone tells you differently, they don't know what they are talking about. I've been studying creativity for many years, and it's been established by creativity experts that everyone has creative abilities. So if anyone tells you you're not creative, ask them to do the research themselves. Or maybe they're just not very creative themselves and can't see beyond the end of their own nose.

When you're in your creative state of mind, don't be afraid of the 'bad' ideas that come up. They will eventually lead you to the useful ideas. You can't tell, initially, if an idea is good or bad. Often, from the craziest, most outrageous ideas spring the most beautiful inspirations. Your idea might be an ugly duckling that just needs to find its new friends.

WHAT'S STOPPING CREATIVE IDEAS TO COME ALIVE?

Company history, legacy and culture combined with people's behaviour will determine how successful and creative the organisation will be. In many organisations today, there are internal politics going on that prevent employees from expressing themselves and fully utilising their creative talent. It affects ever one in the company. Often individuals feel stressed, and there's no tolerance for creativity or innovation, and as a result this makes the employees even more inefficient.

If you want a successful, creative and innovative organisation, you want everyone in your team to feel empowered. All contributors should feel that they are free to share their ideas with others. Aim to create a culture where creativity is encouraged and ideas can grow. It is very similar to gardening. You plant a seed and give it water and sunshine. Screaming at the plant, and demanding that it grow, will not do any good. (Actually a lot of people believe plants grow better with classical music, so I'm quite sure screaming at plants doesn't help at all.) It won't grow faster because you want it to. But if you're providing a nourishing environment, and allow the plant to thrive, you'll be rewarded with a beautiful flower. People work exactly the same way. If they are nurtured, they will yield great results.

DARE TO FAIL

One of the best ways to learn how to be creative is by making mistakes. I've made lots of mistakes when I've been working with digital media, and while leading others. I've learnt a lot and I've also shared my knowledge and experience with others.

A good basic recipe is to do one mistake per week. This will keep you on your toes and you'll learn new things and see new approaches for your work. The companies that are in the Teenage category all have made many mistakes, and they are still keen to explore what they can do and what's next. They just pick themselves up, dust themselves off and try the next big idea.

Some of the biggest creative people in history produced thousands of ideas and most of them were below average — and some of them made them world famous. They allowed themselves to fail and make mistakes. Mozart produced over 600 pieces of music — most of them we are not familiar with. Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, and some of them are brilliant, some bad and some just average. They allowed themselves to create over the whole span from bad to brilliant. You can do this too.

*“Everyone has talent. What is rare
is the courage to follow the talent to the
dark place where it leads.”*

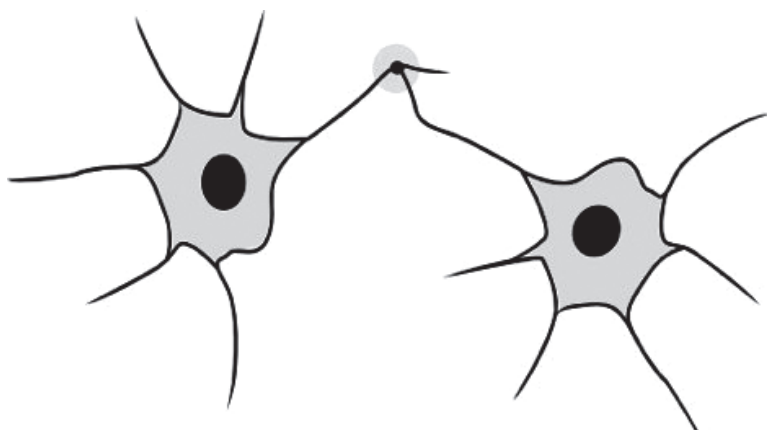
Erica Jong

To be able to open up your creative flow

14 OUR AMAZING BRAIN

Don't you love your brain? It's always with you, and the way you use it is a big part of your personality. This is a quick lesson about how our brain works and how it's helping us in our daily lives.

In our brain we have millions of connections made up by neurones. Where the neurones meet we have a synapse that is joining the paths. Every thought you have is travelling through a neurone and its travelling super-fast. It is in these neurones and synapse connections that we are creating our thought patterns.



Two neurones meet via a synapse

The more often you have a thought, the deeper the connection and pattern is made in your brain. And the more often you're repeating something the deeper imprinted it will become. Just like a trail that turns into a track. One pair of feet leaves almost no trail on the ground, but when many pairs of feet follow the same road, they will leave a strong track, and in the end it will be a highway. It's the same with your thoughts. Imagine what this means for negative thoughts. When a negative thought follows another, it makes it even easier for the third to find its way. Don't you think it's about time to stop allowing negative thoughts to shape your brain?

Every day we have thousands of thoughts going through our head. Brain experts are saying that we have between 60–80,000 thoughts going through our brain every single day.

I would like to ask you a question:
'How many of the 60–80,000 thoughts you have every day are you aware of, and how many are you not aware of?'

Many things we're doing in our daily lives are what we learnt when we were very young. Things that would be very time consuming and annoying to do in a conscious state if we had to. Imagine if you had to think consciously every time you were: eating breakfast, talking to family members, having a shower, reading a book, taking the bus, cycling. It's great that our brain has created a pattern for us here and that we don't have to think when we're doing them. Other situations when you must have access to these patterns are in dangerous situations. We know that we should not walk on the motorway and we are also aware that an iron can be hot and you get burned if you touch it. These are great warning patterns and save us from injuries.

But some of the patterns we have created are not helping us to be creative. We get stuck in our own thought patterns about how the world works and what's possible. This is often called having 'limiting beliefs', and the more we work on them the better we will be at breaking them.

One of the most famous examples of limiting beliefs is the 'four minute barrier'. Nobody thought it was possible to run one mile (1,609 meters) in under four minutes. In 1954 Roger Bannister ran the mile in

3:59:4 minutes and many runners have done it since. Now it's the standard of all male professional middle distance runners. It took one person to show it was possible and the rest followed.

Our conscious mind is working when we're doing something for the first time. I remember when I was learning how to drive a car. In the beginning it was impossible for me to talk and drive at the same time. All my concentration went into driving the car. Now many years later there is no problem with driving and talking at the same time, I've created a pattern in my brain and I do many of the movements without any conscious thinking.

In my daily life I'm in my cosy comfort zone most of the day. Every now and then I'm a bit lost and I'm creating a new pattern in my brain. The first time I meet a new person I am to work with, I'm learning about them and I'm getting to know how their business works. This is an example of creating a new thought pattern.

When I'm lost and don't know where I'm going, I'm creating a new learning pattern about how to find my way. There is a saying that I've heard: 'never trust anyone who's never been lost.' You will probably get more inspiring tips from a person who has been exploring while being lost than from someone who has explored the world with a precise map.

When you are learning a new sport, you are using your conscious mind. After a while you start to see patterns and you understand the rules. I once met Peter in a workshop and he told me how his football team had developed a common thought pattern and now they only have to look at each other to understand what's next. This kind of common knowledge and consciousness appears when you have great connection and understanding between the team members. Peter described it as magic.

In 2012 I set a goal to train 100 people in how creativity works. I wrote it down in my note book. By the end of 2012 I had trained 100 people. When I had written this, I had no idea how I was going to do it, but somehow these 100 people turned up.

This year my goal is to train 1,000 people in digital leadership and how creativity works. I've no idea who they are yet. This is a way for me to challenge my thinking patterns and create new solutions. When you are setting a goal that feels too big, you are expanding your thoughts and you create a new pattern that will give you the solution you need.

*'If you put yourself in a position where
you have to stretch outside your comfort zone then
you're forced to expand your consciousness.'*

Les Brown

CAN YOU CHANGE A HABIT?

Have you ever tried

18 ARE YOU KILLING IDEAS BY PURPOSE OR BY MISTAKE?

I believe that many people and organisations are killing great ideas at an early stage. Again, an effective tool to get around this is the 'Yes and...', and training everyone in the idea development process as great ideas have a tendency to hide among the bad and mediocre ideas.

Anyone can come up with a normal, average idea; that's not a problem. But it's when you're expanding your thinking and dare to come up with something new and unfamiliar that you'll come up with a unique idea that will assure your future success.

If you're working on a marketing campaign, how are you going to come up with amazing ideas? Are you even trying to come up with amazing ideas? Or are you happy with staying in your organisation's comfort zone?

Is your organisation trying to build new partnerships? You're always out on the dating market and you want to work with other fun and inspiring companies. How far away from your comfort zone do you dare to go?

One way to expand your thinking is having small regular workshops in which you aim to create crazy ideas and you're also going to explore those crazy ideas. It is fun to do this, but it takes a determined team to get it working. Warning! It will feel weird at the start because you're challenging your normal thinking patterns.

An idea needs time to grow and many new concepts feel very strange when you start working on developing them. I'll say it again. The way you use your language is going to define how your ideas develop. Another big factor is how you're welcoming new thinking in your team.

SOME COMMON WAYS TO KILL AN IDEA IN ITS EARLY STAGES

- Yes, but... This 'Yes, but...' is the most common way to kill ideas. Often you hear: 'Yes, I like it, but when we tried that two years ago we got very little response.' The word 'but' is almost always followed by a negative comment. And this tiny comment can kill the energy that the idea had for a start.

- 'We don't have a budget for that

PART FOUR

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

“Listen to anyone with an original idea, no matter how absurd it may sound at first. If you put fences around people, you get sheep. Give people the room they need.”

William McKnight, 3M President

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FOLLOW AND LEAD

- LEAD AND FOLLOW

In my career I've worked with some great people who have taught me many useful things. I've developed my knowledge, skills and confidence and also changed my attitude to problems when working with them. They inspired me to follow them in the journey they were on, and I also felt that I could inspire them in return to make the outcome better.

Over 2000 years ago Aristotle said, 'He who cannot be a good follower cannot be a good leader.' I've done my own interpretation of the quote.

We all have something new to learn every day, top leaders as well as young students. Great leaders are humble and open to learn new insights. That keeps them going and it keeps them ahead of everyone else. This is why you have to follow others. Let other peo-

ple who know their stuff teach you new skills and give you new insights.

Another aspect is what I heard several years ago by a military person. 'The troop has to know what to do even if its leader is dead.' This means that you have to know what to do in the next step and what was in the plan even if no one will give you an order. The leader has to make sure that you have the right training to be able to continue working towards the goal without microinstructions.

I believe you have to follow great leaders to be able to learn how to lead. Study what they do and how it works. Your leadership abilities expand every time you have the chance to work with other leaders. Learn from what they have done, what worked and then, when you have the chance to lead, you will have a better idea of what will work for you in different situations.

If you look around and see some great people, engage them in the creative process. Learn from them. You still have a lot to learn whatever age you are. To be surrounded by talented people is a gift; they will make sure you develop yourself.

Sofie says: *"Follow and learn from others and you'll expand your own abilities to become a better leader."*

To be a leader of a digital team can be a challenge, but the more you're aware of the creativity principles the better you and your team will perform. Digital media is developing fast and you have to develop your knowledge to be constantly up to date. If you're good at the basics and know how the online world works, you will find it reasonably easy to keep up with the new information flow.

HEADS UP OR HEADS DOWN. HOW ARE YOU AS
A LEADER IN A CRITICAL MOMENT?

Often it is tempting to

BRING THE DIGITAL AND CREATIVE LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES INTO YOUR ORGANISATION

- The Digital Leadership Masterclass
- Social Media Workshop for Leaders and Influencers
- Creativity Workshop: Creative Thinking for Businesses
- Creativity Workshop: Creativity in Business and Leadership Development
- 1-2-1 Digital and Social Media Training and Coaching

Positive and profound changes take place when you, your employees, colleagues, managers and students are experiencing the principles live in a workshop.

You will learn together how to shape your language and behaviour so it will help you to work better as a team, and become more efficient. When you learn how to listen to each other and treat new ideas better, you are going to achieve a much better result.

Workshops are ideal for groups such as:

- Small businesses
- Corporate teams
- Managers and executives
- Sales and marketing teams
- Corporate conferences
- Students and educators
- Trade associations and its membership
- Health care providers
- Government
- Local authorities

All people will benefit from learning more about idea development, creativity and the digital opportunities. Develop yourself, improve your relationships, and move your team and business to a new level.

Read more at www.sofiesandell.com and contact Sofie Sandell at hello@sofiesandell.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sofie Sandell is an entrepreneur with interests spanning from technology and leadership to art and sailing. Sofie's passion is to teach and inspire people on how to become digital and creative leaders. Sofie is an author, speaker, trainer and university lecturer. In 2013 she spoke about 'Digital Leadership - empowering new ideas' at TEDxUCL. She is also a regular contributor to the technology radio show #TechTalkfest where she talks about all things digital. Sofie has had a number of leadership roles in non-governmental organisations and in 2011 she was awarded the Freedom of the City of London in recognition of her service to the city.

Working in big and small organisations in the last 15 years, Sofie has been exploring not only what makes organisations and teams work well together, but also what makes them perform above and beyond expectation. Sofie has also been involved in Junior Chamber International (JCI) on a local and national level, a global network of young professionals whose mission is to empower young people to create positive change and offers members hands-on leadership experience.

By pushing boundaries in her research on creativity she has been exploring its many aspects, from creativ-

ity in business, improvisational theatre to creative art and Buddhist creative awareness.

Through these experiences Sofie has learnt the importance of trust and letting go. She has found that the most successful teams are teams that trust the creative process, support each other through the process and don't play the blame-game if things don't go as expected. As Sofie says in this book, all ideas start out the same but you can never tell where an idea will end up; you have to trust the process.

Sofie loves technology and she loves communicating. She believes that digital leadership is about creating better and stronger connections online and offline by using the digital tools. Sofie's favourite online networks are Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, MeetUp and the Harvard Business Review blog.

Sofie's clients include small and big businesses, politicians, entrepreneurs, creative professionals, company executives and CEOs who want to succeed in the digital world using their own and their team's creativity.

Sofie was born and raised in Sweden and now lives in London; she works all around the world.

To find out more about Sofie's workshops and training you can contact her at hello@sofiesandell.com.

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