Newsletter

Creative Thinking: Techniques and Tools for Success

Welcome to this latest newsletter for the Creative thinking techniques and tools for success MOOC. This newsletter provides a focus on some aspects of beauty, taking a broad interpretation of the meaning and association with creativity. In particular there is an interview with Govind Balakrishnan, Founder and CEO of Curio, the audio app and his reflections on the importance of taking care with emergent ideas, a feature with Alan Moore, author of beauty by design and we take a look at a couple of examples of creativity principles from TRIZ, the theory of inventive problem solving.

Curio

Recently I met Govind Balakrishnan, CEO of Curio, and talked with him about his journey towards half a million app users. I last met Govind seven years ago when he was graduating from his masters in Innovation Design Engineering. Since then Govind has gone on to set up the Curio. Curio is an app that enables its users to actively engage in audio content. Govind proudly says 'it's all about hearing great journalism'. He mentioned in passing how, because we average 7 hours of multitasking a day, we actually pack in 31 hours in each 24. Curio is now part of this busy life scene with its curated audio helping its users access high quality content on the go.

I asked Govind how he remembered coming up with the idea and he talked about insights from increased consumption of radio and other audio at the BBC combined with falling sales of print. He says the two thoughts combined to indicate a major change in lifestyle and therein the opportunity to do something very different. A lot of prototypes, coding, recoding, hiring/cajoling engaging readers later, and the Curio app was ready to go. Of course, it's not just about having a good idea alone, Curio has leveraged learning algorithms in combination with content pickers to help select content well-suited to the audience, all constantly being updated.

Govind Balakrishnan

I have always found Govind to be a fount of ideas and it was interesting to hear him say 'any two smart people can kill of an idea' and 'these things (ideas) are fragile, delicate, beautiful, like a baby; treat with care. You need to be motivated; you need to an optimist and believe in it.' He has, I think neatly summed up the importance of holding on to emergent creativity and not being too quick in finding the fault in an idea that is yet to be developed.

Alan Moore

Why Beauty is Key

As part of the MOOC we are doing some Webinars. The most recent featured Alan Moore, author of three books on creativity, and business transformation including, *Do Design: Why Beauty is Key to Everything*. Alan's work is focused on three interlocking themes; beauty, craft and design, and how we can bring more beauty into our world by how we live and what we make. Working directly with companies and organisations, Alan mentors, individuals or teams, as well as delivering inspirational leadership programmes, and advising on how their business can become more beautiful.

During the conversation Alan talks through examples of teams and organisations he thinks are setting about their activities with a holistic and creative view and thereby delivering on the concept of a beautiful business.

You can watch the webinar again here.

Triz

One of the tools we have introduce in the MOOC is a tool called TRIZ. TRIZ is a Russian acronym which can be translated as the theory of inventive problem solving. TRIZ actually offers several powerful tools and approaches. One of the building blocks in TRIZ is a list of 40 principles of invention. The list can be used on its own, just casting your eye down the list to see if one of the principles serves to provoke an idea for the challenge or opportunity you are facing at the moment. Here we describe just a couple of the principles, local quality and asymmetry.

Image source: **Amazon**

Local Quality (Principle 3) - This principle states that you don't have to assume that the current use or location of parts in a system cannot be changed. Local Quality involves identifying specific parts and changing or moving them so that they can operate at optimal conditions. This may involve changing an object's structure from uniform to non-uniform, making each part of a system fulfil a different or complementary function. [1]. This principle is embodied in many ergonomic grips where the local quality is altered to imply for user where and how to hold and use an item.

Image source: **Matchesfashion**

Asymmetry (Principle 4) - Symmetry is a powerful organising factor. We tend to find symmetric products more aesthetically pleasing. Symmetric objects also tend to be easier to form and manufacture. However, a symmetric object may not be the easiest to handle or organise. Asymmetry involves replacing a symmetrical form with an asymmetrical form. Alternatively, if an object is already asymmetrical, the degree of asymmetry can be increased. Asymmetric stirrers and paddles mix more effectively than symmetric ones. Asymmetric scissors handles provide increased ease of use. Asymmetry is widely used in fashion to produce interesting and engaging styles. As the asymmetry principle involves changing the geometric form it is often an easy method for exploiting the available resource inherent in the geometric form of an object. [1]

A full list of all 40 principles can be found in the MOOC, in [1] or by searching on a search engine for the '40 principles of invention'.

[1] Childs, PRN. Mechanical Design Engineering Handbook. Butterworth Heinemann, 2018.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

In our next live webinar in 2020, Peter will discuss the use of boundary objects to encourage and enhance creativity.

Date: Monday, 2nd March 2020
Time: 17:00 GMT

INTERESTED IN THE PREVIOUS LIVE WEBINARS?

Review the full recordings now available in the Creative Thinking course.
September Webinar: Meet Peter Childs
October Webinar: Let's Meet Charlotte Slingsby
January Webinar: Discover Alan Moore