

CHAPTER TWELVE

BLAST OFF!

**Creating environments that
put creativity into orbit.**





‘Vision without action is hallucination.’ Benjamin Franklin

Following through with ideas is as important as having them in the first place so they don’t just become conversation fodder for cocktail parties (‘I had this great idea once. You should have seen the size of it. Huh ... wonder whatever happened to it ...?’). Most great ideas only saw the light of day as a result of the tireless perseverance of an individual or group of dedicated people, each of whom had battled against all odds. In fact, it takes blood, sweat and tears (and luckily there are washing powders that will get rid of even the toughest of stains). Inventor James Dyson built 5,127 prototypes of his bagless vacuum cleaner, the Dual Cyclone, before he perfected his design, yet all the major vacuum cleaner manufacturers who were making too much money selling vacuum cleaner bags rejected it. Hoover Vice-President, Mike Rutter, later said on national television, ‘I do regret that Hoover as a company did not take the product technology off Dyson; it would have lain on the shelf and not been used.’¹

Having conviction in the idea is vital. Even if it’s not perfect yet, belief in it will have an effect on others who might realise it’s an unstoppable train that they should get on, or miss and lose out on a big opportunity. Sometimes you just need to take a deep breath, look supremely confident, and go for it. Henry Ford said, ‘If you think you can, or if you think you can’t, you’re right.’ Burt Rutan, who ran the team that developed the Voyager spacecraft, said, ‘Confidence in nonsense is required.’² And it’s said by people who have worked with Apple co-founder Steve Jobs that he has a

¹www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/supportservices/2795244/James-Dyson-the-vacuum-dreamer.html

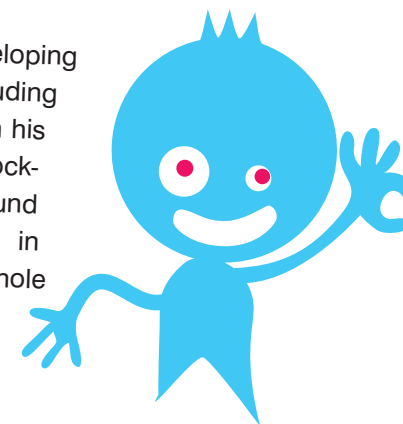
²‘The Weird Rules of Creativity’, Robert Sutton, *Harvard Business Review*, September 2001.

‘reality distortion field’, or a spell that he casts on those around him, convincing them of the success of an idea. Not that any of what Steve Jobs does is nonsense; it’s just that he just has an amazing knack for selling the ideas he likes.

Christian Audigier, who runs his own billion-dollar clothing empire, says in his wonderful French accent that, ‘You need to insist to exist. If you don’t insist, you’re not going to exist.’

Someone can close a door – this one doesn’t want you – you can come back a week later or a month later and one day this door’s going to open for you, you know.’ His success with Von Dutch gave him his moment in the spotlight, his 15 minutes of fame, but he still had to work incredibly hard to make inroads with his own venture,³ Ed Hardy. He had to prove to the retailers that he could deliver. To launch the brand to them he put on his own trade show in Las Vegas that competed head-on with MAGIC, traditionally the largest gathering of men’s fashion-buyers in the US. His show was called *When I Move, You Move*. It was an expensive and audacious ploy that got the attention of the whole fashion industry – something that just having a booth at MAGIC would never have done. The next year the organisers of MAGIC came to Christian asking him to collaborate with them. He moved and they moved.

In addition to Ed Hardy, Christian Audigier is developing other fashion projects that break the mould, including the high-end casualwear label Crystal Rock with his daughter and, with Dave, Rock Fabulous, a rock-and-roll lifestyle brand. When Business Playground interviewed Christian he had recently been in conversations with Madonna about creating a whole fashion empire around the Madonna brand.



³He was head designer at Von Dutch, but it was owned by Tonny Sorensen.

‘Today I’m working on a potential new project with Madonna,’ he said. ‘Her management told me she wants to build an empire, and I thought “That’s great”; she has huge assets, she has her name, her song titles, her album titles, she has a lot of pictures of herself, she has reinvented herself every two years – spiritual Kabala woman, material girl, erotica girl. So what I proposed was we do something that involved the three tiers of the fashion business – Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdales and Target⁴ – so she can be merchandised everywhere. The idea is to separate out her life story. One brand would be *Erotica*, that’s going to be for the upper tiers like Neiman Marcus. We would have *True Blue*, the title of one of her albums, in Bloomingdales, and we’d have the *Like A Virgin* brand for Target. And I believe we can go to all those tiers at the same time.’

Christian’s philosophy is that iconic artists such as Madonna, the Stones, Kanye West, or even actors like Jack Nicholson, can become fashion brands if there is a single unifying creative vision for the brand and control over the design, merchandising and marketing of the products. He never does things in half measures and says, ‘If you want to build an empire you need to arrive with your army at the same time’. To him energy is the most important thing in life. He’s 50 and had a heart attack 4 years ago. ‘I was dead on the counter and nothing was moving,’ he says. ‘I woke up a day later and I thought I would not be able to work anymore.’ He’s now determined to make the next 20 years of his career really count. To him now everything is possible. **‘We French say that impossible is not French.’ Insist to exist.**

⁴Three large US chains of shops: Neiman Marcus is high-end, Bloomingdales is more affordable and Target is all about value.

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN (IT’S ALWAYS HIT AND RUN)

**‘I have not failed. I’ve just found
10,000 ways that won’t work.’
Thomas Edison**



Here’s a conundrum: can a business be both efficient and creative? Can it have processes in place that enable it to deliver goods or services at a profit, and still allow enough leeway to take the risks and make the mistakes that being innovative requires? This is something many businesses struggle with. 3M is known as an innovation powerhouse, but its invention of the Post-it note is a long way in the past.⁵ 3M CEO George Buckley, in trying to recreate the culture of innovation that existed in the company’s heyday, recognises that efficiency programmes might need to take a back seat. **‘Invention is by its very nature a disorderly process,’** he says.⁶ ‘You can’t put a Six Sigma process into that area and say, well, I’m getting behind on invention, so I’m going to schedule myself for three good ideas on Wednesday and two on Friday. That’s not how creativity works.’ He’s referring to Six Sigma, a business-management strategy originally developed by Motorola to identify and remove the causes of errors and defects in manufacturing and business processes. Specially trained experts in the disciplines of Six Sigma are called ‘Black Belts’ – and boy are they tough. Hi-yah!

⁵About 30 years in the past, in fact. Art Fry and Spencer Silver developed it over a number of years during the 1970s and it finally went into full production in 1980.

⁶‘At 3M, A Struggle Between Efficiency and Creativity: How CEO George Buckley is managing the yin and yang of discipline and imagination’, Brian Hindo, *Business Week*, 11 June 2007.

In the 3M of old, much like the Google of today, employees were actively encouraged to develop their own independent pet projects and apply for funding for them from sources within the company. Risk and failure were accepted as part of the '3M way'. Art Fry, inventor of the Post-it note, questions whether his innovation would have ever seen the light of day in an environment that embraces efficiency over experimentation. His view is that, **'Innovation is a numbers game. You have to go through 5,000 to 6,000 raw ideas to find one successful business.'**⁷

Six Sigma, on the other hand, tries to avoid errors – and it's making errors that makes innovation possible. Marva Collins, a US educator who worked tirelessly to help impoverished students in and around Chicago to get a decent education, said, 'If you can't make a mistake, you can't make anything.'

Many readers will (and just as many won't) remember from school the story of how penicillin was discovered. In 1928, while researching the flu virus, Dr Alexander Fleming (after whom phlegm is named⁸) noticed that some mould had contaminated a flu culture in one of his Petri dishes. Instead of throwing it away, as most house-proud folks would do, he kept it to examine it more closely. Fleming had learned the benefits of scientific breakthrough discovered by chance a few years previously when by accident he had shed a tear on a bacteria sample, only to find that the area around the teardrop became free of bacteria. This led him to discover that the tear contained an antibiotic enzyme that could stave off mild bacterial growth. We don't know why he was crying in the first place, but that's beside the point. The mould on the Petri dish of flu culture piqued his curiosity and through further investigation he found that the mould was lethal to the potent *staphylococcus* bacteria in his dish. The

⁷'At 3M, A Struggle Between Efficiency and Creativity', Brian Hindo, *Business Week*, 11 June 2007.

⁸That's not true at all. It comes from the Middle-English word 'fleume'.

mould came from the genus penicillin, and the rest is history (as was the bit before). He won the Nobel Prize in 1945 – all because he cried like a baby in his lab one day. 'But for the previous experience, I would have thrown the plate away, as many bacteriologists had done before,' said Fleming.

The microwave was also invented by chance (not Chance the Gardener,⁹ just by chance). When Percy Lebaron Spencer was working on magnetrons, a type of device designed to produce the microwave signals for use in radars, and was standing near a working machine with a bar of chocolate in his pocket (we think he was trying to impress the female researchers in the lab) the chocolate melted and – ping! – the microwave oven was born.

CATCHING SPARKS

All of us come across ideas by chance and we can also create opportunities to make those chances more likely. Good old serendipity. You have to be ready to catch those ideas when they pop into your head. Often they'll seem unrelated to whatever projects you're working on, but you'll be surprised how often they connect at a later date. To stop them floating away you might want to carry around a notebook. Yes, just a regular old-fashioned notebook to jot down notes and ideas. (Moleskine, made by Modo&Modo of Italy, make a lovely range of simple, black covered books just asking to be scribbled in.) **Train yourself to write down any thoughts or ideas in your notebook and then regularly look through it to see if they spark inspiration for what you're working on.**

⁹See section on metaphors in Chapter 6.

Using notebooks can be a way to conduct a group brainstorming over a period of weeks rather than the typical hour or two, letting ideas develop, stew and ferment into a tasty brew. To start with, as always, the problem the group is trying to solve needs to be clearly articulated, maybe written up on the first page of the notebook so participants can refer back to it. Then over the next four weeks the members of the group are each asked to come up with one idea a day to solve the creative problem that has been set. Every few days or so they are given some new piece of relevant information or stimulus to help push their thinking along. At the end of the month the group are tasked with writing down the *one* idea they developed that they consider to be the best to solve the problem, together with some suggestions for further exploration. They should also write down ideas they came up with that seem unrelated to the problem as a way to create an *ideas bank* for future projects.

Another way to use notebooks is to have regular idea jams. This is the freestyle jazz of idea creation.

People, whether or not they're all working together on the same project, can gather together once a month to share the ideas they've captured in their notebooks. Put people's names in a hat (if they've got into the contemporary jazz mood a few of them will be wearing hats anyway) to see who starts. The chosen one picks an idea or interesting thought from his or her notebook and explains it to the group. Sometimes there'll be murmurs of appreciation or a smattering of applause, sometimes not. Others throw in their take on the idea and add in relevant thoughts from their books that might help build on it.



Having an idea jam in which the people involved aren't working on a specific problem, but instead are just capturing and discussing random ideas, might at first glance seem like a waste of time for a busy business, but we beg to differ. For one, having and sharing ideas just feels good, simple as that, and, for two, idea jams train us to capture and discuss random ideas and so are a great way to explore and hone our creative abilities. And, for three, the ideas discussed might actually lead to something relevant to the business context or even lead to an idea for a valuable subsidiary business. So, go with the flow, man, chill. Oh, and four, businesses that have tried it have had good success. IBM held their first World Jam in 2001 as a three-day web-based moderated group brainstorm. 2006's jam was, according to their website, the biggest brainstorming ever, involving 150,000 people from 104 countries and 67 companies around the world who together posted 46,000 ideas (see our chapter *Kill the Idea* on how to whittle down your ideas). And as a result '10 new IBM businesses were launched with seed investment totaling \$100 million.'¹⁰ We salute you, big blue.

CULTURES OF CREATIVITY

'You can't just give someone a creativity injection. You have to create an environment for curiosity and a way to encourage people and get the best out of them,' says creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson. But, 'creating a culture of innovation and creativity in companies is more than just setting up a cool room with creative toys and a whiteboard.'¹¹ Pixar, the

¹⁰From the IBM Jam events page www.collaborationjam.com

¹¹Sir Ken Robinson, quoted in 'Reading, Writing, and Creativity: Education guru Sir Ken Robinson talks about the importance of nurturing innovative solutions in the classroom – indeed, in every aspect of modern life', *Business Week* online, 23 February 2006.

Disney-owned animation studio, is a good example of how to do it right. Employees are entitled to spend four hours each week at what's known as Pixar University, where there are classes, events and workshops throughout the day and the attendees are actively encouraged not to do anything job-related. Cool.

W.L. Gore and Associates is a developer and manufacturer of innovative materials and is most famous for its waterproof and breathable GORE-TEX fabric. **The company encourages its employees to play with new ideas to see what they come up with.** For instance, while Gore had

previously nothing to do with the music business, it now has a third of the guitar-string market through its non-breakable guitar strings, Elixir. Elixir was developed by a Gore engineer playing with the cables on his mountain bike to see how he could improve them, which got him thinking about guitar strings, and then led him to team up with another Gore engineer who worked on the non-breakable dental floss, Glide. Lots more playing around and three years later Elixir was born (cautionary note: never floss your teeth or play the guitar while mountain biking).

A study by London Business School researchers¹² investigated how companies like Google, 3M, Pixar and Gore use play in the workplace to stimulate creativity and make possible breakthrough ideas that keep them ahead of the competition. The authors concluded that businesses encourage play in three ways: by creating a playful environment; by allowing employees the freedom, time and resources to make play a part of their work; and by giving them the safety to experiment in areas that aren't necessarily a part of the company's core businesses.

¹²'Ideas are Born in Fields of Play: Towards a Theory of Play and Creativity in Organizational Settings', Charalampos Mainemelis and Sarah Ronson, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 27, 2006, pp. 81–131.

But introducing a sense of play in the workplace is not without its challenges.

Samsung, the Korean electronics giant, so as to maintain its position as Asia's most valuable technology company, has been trying to implement a more creative culture. Apparently it's not always easy in a culture like Samsung's, where hard work traditionally looks like, well, hard work. In their Value Innovation Programme Centre a little south of Seoul, 'The engineers immediately start tidying up and stacking all the magazines in date order, the R&D people only want to talk with Americans, and the designers just stand there and don't say anything,' says¹³ Chung Sue-Young, one of the centre coordinators. It seems to be working, though. At the innovation centre they came up with the wine-glass-shaped Bordeaux flatscreen TV, the first Samsung TV to sell over one million units.

Tero Ojanperä, Executive Vice-President at Nokia, told Business Playground: 'You need to break the traditional linear way of thinking. You need to break the existing departments. You need to bring in new people. You need to figure out the new ways of putting different types of people together.' But, again, he knows it isn't always easy: 'For companies it's really a challenge to put together the different types of people, because very often the like-minded people gravitate together. Engineers talk to engineers. Artists will talk to artists. How can we break that mould? How can we force people who think differently together?' The Nokia Ideas Camp is an attempt to help. Tero says, 'Our Ideas Camp is a step in that direction. We invite really different types of people together with an agenda that gets formed on the spot.'



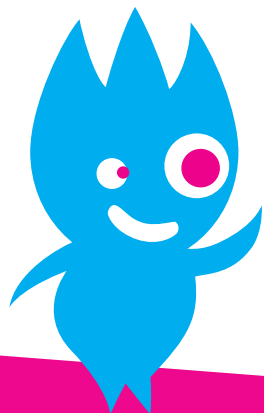
¹³'Samsung Sows for the Future with its Garden of Delights', Anna Fifield, *Financial Times*, 2 January 2008.

Robert Sutton, Professor of Science and Engineering at Stanford University, supports the notion that creative businesses can make people who are used to more traditional ways of working feel uncomfortable. 'After studying creative companies and teams for more than a decade,' he says,¹⁴ 'I've found them to be remarkably inefficient and often terribly annoying places to work, where "managing by getting out of the way" is often the best approach of all.' He continues, **'Managing for creativity, I've discovered, means taking most of what we know about management and standing it on its head.'**

It means placing bets on ideas without much heed to the projected ROI [return on investment]. It means ignoring what has worked before. It means taking perfectly happy people and goading them into fights among themselves. Good creativity management means hiring the candidate you have a gut feeling against. And as for those people who stick their fingers in their ears and chant, "I'm not listening, I'm not listening," when customers are making suggestions? It means praising and promoting them.'

Christian Audigier's approach to hiring is simple: 'If people can give me something more creative than my ideas I'll take them. I love to drink all this stuff.' He often hires them, not based upon experience, but on their *willingness to try new things*. Professor Sutton is a strong believer in hiring people for innovative businesses that are slow at learning the ways things 'should be done'. Instead of fitting in too easily, they should question and rebel and create waves. He tells the story of the guy who invented the laser printer at Xerox, Gary Starkweather. Over many months he pushed and pushed for the use of lasers rather than white light to 'paint' images for document copying, despite repeated objections by researchers and bosses who were convinced it wasn't the way to go. Eventually, when the department he was working with could stand his dogged persistence no longer, he was transferred to a new research facility. When the

¹⁴'The Weird Rules of Creativity', Robert Sutton, *Harvard Business Review*, September 2001.



Xerox laser printer he helped develop was finally launched it became one of company's best-selling products. If Mr Starkweather had just 'fitted in' and followed instructions to drop his pursuit of lasers, the Xerox laser printer would never have come about.

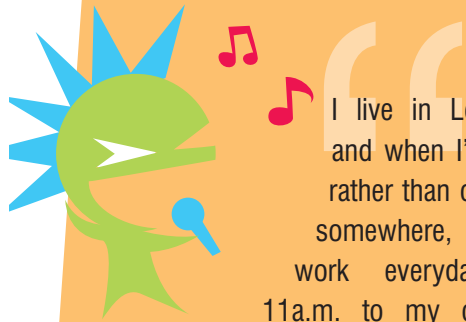
A recent IBM/Economist report entitled 'The Enterprise of the Future'¹⁵ says that for businesses to successfully meet the challenges of what in the future will be certain change, there need to be: 'visionary challengers – people who question assumptions and suggest radical, and what some might initially consider, impractical, alternatives.' Danny Socolof, the veteran music industry deal-maker, talked about the 'internal entrepreneurs' who drive change in large corporations by taking risks, sometimes without having been given express permission to do so (see Chapter 3).

Hiring people from different backgrounds and with different perspectives and skills helps keep things fresh. But **it's not just the variety of people that matters; an individual might have multiple social identities that provide new points of view.**

Research by Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks, Fiona Lee and Chi-Ying Cheng¹⁶ focuses on people who have 'multiple social identities', for instance, being both Asian and American or both women and engineers. They found that individuals with multiple social identities like these show higher levels of creativity for problems that make use of the knowledge that comes through their different perspectives. An environment in which female engineers aren't forced to suppress their femininity by dressing like men, for instance, should make them more comfortable with their different social identities and so more creative. (Neither should male engineers be pressured into dressing like women, but what they do at the weekend is totally up to them.)

¹⁵'The Enterprise of the Future: Global CEO Study', conducted by IBM and The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008.

¹⁶'Identity Integration and Innovation', Chi-Ying Cheng, Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks and Fiona Lee, Ross School of Business Working Paper series, March 2007.



I live in Los Angeles and when I'm at home rather than off travelling somewhere, I go to work everyday around 11a.m. to my offices and the studio I share with my great friend, Glen Ballard. My offices are on the fifth floor and have been described¹⁷ as a cross between Willy Wonka's Factory and Andy Warhol's Factory.¹⁸ My factory is an ideas factory called 'Weapons of Mass Entertainment' (WME). There are no real office rules or guidelines, we just have ideas and either make them work quickly or put them aside (we never throw them away, although sometimes I give them away, either wittingly or unwittingly!). There is no regular day and the staff know that at any moment I could arrive with anyone from John Williams (producer of the film *Shrek*, among others), to Marvin Jarrett (the editor of *Nylon* magazine), or Colbie Caillat (a young singer-songwriter) ... or perhaps the CEO of a technology company.

In fact, during the day there is an endless stream of creative people in and out of the office, and many different topics are discussed, from animated feature films,

to online transparent payment systems, to song choruses. At all times staff will wander in and out and join in on the conversations, or just carry on working with headphones on and eyes glued to computer screens. My company is a creative company and, hey, guess what, I employ creative people. They include Kori Bundi, a young filmmaker and editor; Dave Harris, a scriptwriter and researcher; Ned Douglas, an amazing music programmer, writer and engineer; Tony Quinn, who can literally do anything you ask him (and competed in the world kick-boxing championships); Jamie Bryant, a young visual artist; Nick Corcoran, a writer and filmmaker; Angela Vicari, who spins 12 plates doing things like schedules for *Ghost* musical workshops and film company meetings, setting up events, and even creating the posters; Faithe Dillman, who only needs one hour's sleep yet is a whirling dervish and can text on two phones at once; and Allison Bond, receptionist and project coordinator. We also have an army of legal experts and business advisors and numerous talented individuals we bring in on a project-by-project basis.

As well as inventing and running projects, we also manage some upcoming artists

such as Nadirah X, a rap artist, singer and actress Cindy Gomez, virtuoso violinist Anne-Marie Calhoun, actress and singer Natalie Mendoza, and A Girl Called Boy. What's amazing about our office is that everyone can join in the discussions, even though it may not be their field of expertise. In fact, often the artists we manage join in on the discussions on other projects we are doing at WME, even work on the projects or do research for us, and have been known to act as chauffeurs, driving me to meetings, or answering the phones! Basically, it's a madhouse. If anyone thought 'the lunatics have taken over the asylum', then this is the place where it rings true. Yet we happen to be working with some of the largest companies in the world, plus we have a real martini bar in the office, so we can't be that crazy.

Upstairs on the sixth floor are the studios and edit suites that I share with Glen Ballard. At first glance this looks a lot more calm and serene. But, don't be fooled, this also is a madhouse, with Glen and me working on at least 10 music projects together at the same time, as well as on our own separate projects. Glen is as methodical as I am impetuous, so we make a great team. As well as Glen being a genius songwriter and

producer,¹⁹ he is also a perfect collaborative partner who always listens to ideas and digests them before forming an opinion. He also knows how important it is to let 'idea spaghetti' tumble out of my head and not to stop the flow. Glen and I will never run out of things to write songs about or have nothing going on in the studio because we are two 'radiators'. You see there are 'drains' and 'radiators' in this world and if you are in a business that needs creative input (which is *all* businesses), it's best to hire 'radiators' rather than 'drains' and something we call 'FPP' (Fast Positive People).

A good example of how Glen and I work together was on a children's film called *Charlotte's Web*, based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning book. We were asked to write the title song for the film and readily accepted as it's a great book and Dakota Fanning was playing the lead. Plus Burt Berman, a great movie music man, was steering the ship and the last time I worked with Burt, Mick Jagger and I won a Golden Globe for best song in a movie²⁰. Glen and I met with Burt and the director and discussed the book and how it was going to be interpreted for the big screen. When we left the meeting we both knew that writing a song about a pig and a

¹⁷The *Los Angeles Times* described the offices as 'a media company for the new world'.

¹⁸Andy Warhol's New York studio was called The Factory. The original one – later ones were also known as The Factory – that he had from 1962–68 was on the fifth floor of 231 East 47th Street, in Manhattan, and attracted a mix of musicians, artists and filmmakers.

¹⁹Glen produced Alanis Morissette's amazing 1995 album *Jagged Little Pill*, which has sold more than 30 million copies worldwide.

²⁰'Old Habits Die Hard' was a song for the 2004 film *Alfie*, which won the 2005 Golden Globe for Best Original Song.

spider was not going to be easy, but we were pretty confident we would come up with something. The day Glen and I were meant to go see a first rough cut, Glen was sick with the flu bug so I went on our behalf and, halfway through the screening, I sent a text message to Glen saying the song should be called 'Ordinary Miracle'. Before I got back to the studio Glen sent me an audio file with the first verse melody and singing lyrics, and it was sounding perfect. I sent a message back saying, 'Great, don't change a thing' – you see he had already cracked the code and, as his teammate, I was cheering him on and excited to join in.

Once we had made a template or blueprint of the whole song, with me singing the demo, and after it had been 'analysed' by the film studio (which is a bit like being on trial for armed robbery), we got the song green-lit. We both really wanted Sarah McLachlan to sing it so we sent her a rough version, and she liked it, so we hopped on a plane to Vancouver with Sam Schwartz, our film agent, Burt Berman and the legendary Randy Spendlove to record Sarah in her beautiful home studio in the woods. I wanted a video with Dakota Fanning miming the words sitting at the piano with Sarah's voice coming out of her mouth. I thought that would be odd and get people's attention,

especially children around the world. But they made a straightforward video of Sarah at the piano intercut with the movie.

Now when you write a song and it's finished and exists, it becomes a business in itself – a kind of 'song brand' – and in fact a huge business would be to manage these 'song brands' properly. For instance, 'Sweet Dreams' as a song is known in every country around the world. It's much better known than Annie or myself. If I walked up to most strangers in any country and sang, 'Sweet Dreams are Made of This', they would say, 'I know that song,' but would not necessarily know Eurythmics or Annie Lennox or Dave Stewart. This song 'Ordinary Miracle' became a phenomenon on the web and if you type it in YouTube you will see thousands of people making their own video to it, of their child being born, or of beautiful landscapes, or of a school choir singing it.²¹ Songs as 'intellectual property' (IP) are not unlike software or other trademarked inventions that get licensed for a fee or a royalty, and the creative process that goes into writing a song is pretty similar to the creative process that goes into solving many problems. It's like a jigsaw puzzle or a code that needs to be cracked, the only difference being that songwriting usually includes personal emotional storytelling as part of the puzzle.

²¹It also became the theme song on a commercial for the CVS pharmacy chain in US.

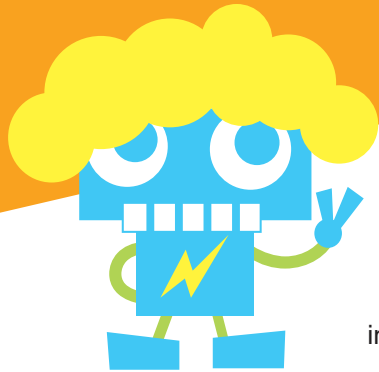
MONEY, THAT'S WHAT I WANT...?

How important are money and other extrinsic rewards, such as job title and recognition, in motivating individuals to want to produce creative work? Glad you asked. **Evidence from various studies suggests that when people think they are going to be rewarded for creativity, they are in fact more creative.** In the words of Bobbi Flekman, the hostess with the mostess in Rob Reiner's film *This is Spinal Tap*, 'money walks and bullshit talks'. The data backs this up. A review of existing studies by one researcher showed that, 'The expectation that creativity will be rewarded causes individuals to define the task as requiring creativity, to become immersed in it, and to search for novel ways of carrying it out.'²² And in contrast, if people think a reward depends on them performing without using creativity, that's what they'll do – be less creative.

Of course, as you might expect, it's not quite that simple. While extrinsic rewards, such as cold hard cash, play a very important role, the *intrinsic* rewards – things like intellectual curiosity or seeing a creative task as a personal challenge – are also big drivers of creativity. One research paper looked at the relationship between the number of patents filed – an indication of creative output – and the individual motivations of the workers who created the innovations that were patented. Data²³ collected from more than 11,000 US research and development (R&D) employees in manufacturing and service companies showed that the R&D folk involved in the early-stage types of research (more R than D) were more productive if

²²'Rewards, Intrinsic Motivation, and Creativity: A Case Study of Conceptual and Methodological Isolation', R. Eisenberger and L. Shanock, *Creativity Research Journal*, 2003.

²³People were surveyed by the National Science Foundation.



motivated by the intellectual challenge of the task, and a degree of independence was more important for them than it was for workers involved in later stages (more D than R).

How people perceive their work environments unsurprisingly has an effect on their creativity.

According to an extensive study using workers' diary entries as data,²⁴ 'People were over 50 per cent more likely to have creative ideas on the days they reported the most positive moods than they were on other days,' and, 'the more positive a person's mood on a given day, the more creative thinking he or she did the next day – and, to some extent, the day after that.' If they see work in a positive light – you know, good bosses, collaborative spirit, focused on a creative vision, being rewarded for creativity – they are more likely to be creative than when things were screwed up – infighting, an aversion to new ideas and taking risks – in which cases their creative juices sort of dry up. So, yes Bobbi, while money does indeed talk, if people aren't into what they're doing, the bullshit walks.

²⁴'Inner Work Life: Understanding the Subtext of Business Performance', Teresa M. Amabile and Steven J. Kramer, *Harvard Business Review*, May 2007, looked at over 12,000 diary entries from 238 professionals in different work teams.

THE BUSINESS PLAYGROUND CREATIVITY QUOTIENT (BPCQ) TEST

As there is IQ, or Intelligence Quotient, as a measure of how intelligent (whatever that means) people are, it stands to reason there should be CQ, or Creativity Quotient, as a measure of how creative they are. Of course, creativity already has an obvious measure: the output that a person creates. Lots of amazing piano concertos suggests creativity. Piles of great canvases, creative too. Shelves of wonderful novels – yup, creative. But just looking at creative output isn't enough, for a couple of reasons. First, who's to say whether any of the things created are actually any good? (As we said way earlier in the book, they have to be both unique and useful rather than just notes on a staff, blobs on a canvas, or words on a page.) And, second, while all ideas should have some manifestation (a thing that comes as a result of it) creative output is rarely so clear-cut or simple as an object that expresses an idea or set of ideas. **In business, the things that our creative talents contribute to might be a system, or a business model, or a way of thinking about something, and it almost always involves collaboration between many, many people.**

There are tests that specifically try to measure creativity – the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking developed by psychologist Paul Torrance being one notable example – but we felt the world could do with one more. The Business Playground Creative Quotient (we couldn't get a really snappy acronym from those letters so for now we're calling it BPCQ) is designed not to tell people how creative they are being, but to inform them how creative they can be if they open their minds to the possibilities.

Why not take our simple test to see what your BPCQ score is.

1 Being distracted by something unrelated to a problem can help you solve the problem. So imagine you are getting on a bus to take a short journey, one that will let your body and mind wander. Do you:

- a.** Head towards the bench seat at the back?
- b.** Sit near the driver so you can see the people getting on and off?
- c.** Get your biscuits out of your bag before sitting down?
- d.** Change your mind and get on to a different bus going on another route?
- e.** Talk to the woman in the green hat?

(Answer: it doesn't matter, so long as you leave your problem behind for a few hours.)

2 Half the battle is deciding what is the question you're trying to answer through creativity. If you are a baker trying to make more money, which questions help your thinking?

- a.** How can I create bread that is even better than sliced bread?
- b.** How can I increase sales of my bread?
- c.** How can I increase the profit margins for my bread?
- d.** What else can I sell that will make me some bread?
- e.** Are there any job openings as a candlestick maker in the area?

(Answer: a, b, c and d are all good

questions and worth exploring, but as each is a very different take on the bigger problem of making more money and demands different creative solutions, pick one at a time. Being a candlestick maker is a possibility, but might require some retraining.)

3 Corporate environments are rarely very conducive ones for identifying and executing big ideas. You find yourself in the lift with the CEO and want to tell her your idea that you've been trying to get through the bureaucracy below her for months. Would you:

- a.** Jam your finger on the emergency stop button and make your pitch at your leisure?
- b.** Blurt it out as quickly as you can, not knowing how long it will be before she gets out, or others get in?
- c.** Make a friendly comment about the stock price and then say nothing else?
- d.** Ask her for 10 minutes of her time at another date?
- e.** Do none of these things then kick yourself metaphorically and in reality when you leave the lift?

(Answer: We don't know, it's a tough one. Option d sounds like the most sensible, options a and b only happen in cheesy movies and options c and e are what most people do, and who can blame them given the way most corporations focus on efficiency at the expense of creativity?)

4 Quantity of novel ideas generated is more important than quality, at least in the early stages of the creative process. We call this idea spaghetti. If the problem is *finding creative uses for a household brick*, how many ideas can you come up with for a brick in two minutes, starting now?

- a.** 21–40.
- b.** 9–19.
- c.** 40+.
- d.** Less than 2.
- e.** 21 exactly.

(Answer: either a or c would be good, b is so-so and e would just be weird!)

5 Drawing diagrams and pictures can help us think through problems creatively by tapping into a different part of the brain, one that relies less on our abilities to process language. Is it best to:

- a.** Take a furry pencil case with you wherever you go, one that is full of brightly coloured pens and pencils?
- b.** Hire a professional sketch artist to sit in during brainstorming sessions to capture comments and ideas?
- c.** Take time to sit and think with a piece of paper to sketch your thoughts on?
- d.** Draw caricatures of your work colleagues while they're talking?
- e.** Add doodles to important documents?

(Answer: Option c for sure. Option a

works if it's a great pencil case and b sometimes works if the sketch artists are good and you know how to use what they've done. Options d and e are fine if you want to get fired quickly. Creating isn't always about just sitting staring at a computer screen, and in fact sitting at a computer screen can distract us from genuine thinking, so get a pad and start sketching out what's on your mind.)

6 Humour and creativity are closely linked, as jokes and ideas are both ways of looking at the world in unexpected ways. Pick two or more of the following to create a joke that connects them:

- a.** A nun.
- b.** A penguin.
- c.** A fish.
- d.** A prostitute.
- e.** A pair of knickers.

(Answer: If you laughed merely at the thought of combining some of these ideas then you see what we mean, it's funny!)

7 Doing certain activities before being creative can boost our performance. Which ones of these have been shown to work?

- a.** Aerobic exercise.
- b.** Playing certain videogames.
- c.** Listening to music.
- d.** Filing your taxes and your nails.
- e.** Having sex.

(Answer: Options a, b and c, either by increasing blood flow to our brains or improving our mood, or in some cases both. Having sex must work too, but we couldn't find any scientific studies that tested it.)

- 8 Coming up with ideas in groups in the form of brainstorms is sometimes counterproductive, with the number and quality of ideas produced being less than when people work individually. Which of these techniques helps make brainstorming sessions more productive?

- a. Setting the goals very high.
- b. Using doughnuts as a way to increase the blood-sugar levels.
- c. Ridiculing any suggestions other than one's own, either with a verbal put-down or just a snort of contempt.
- d. Making the mix of people less homogenous by including people from varying backgrounds, skills and identities.
- e. All being naked with the lights off.

(Answer: Definitely a and d, but we suspect option e might work too.)

- 9 Creating the right environment for the creative juices involves more than how creative the space you're working in looks. Which one of these things is the

odd one out because it doesn't help bring out our creative abilities?

- a. Being paid cold hard cash as an incentive.
- b. The boss giving clear goals for what is expected from a project.
- c. Feeling good about the work you're doing.
- d. A positive collaborative environment.
- e. Being allowed to wear big clown shoes to the office.

(Answer: you guessed it, b. Sorry, we meant e.)

- 10 What's the best idea you've ever heard, either old or new, yours or someone else's? Write it down and answer the following questions about it:

- a. What is the fundamental human need it solves?
- b. What two existing elements did it connect in a new way?
- c. What do you think the barriers were/are to making it happen?
- d. What combination of factors made it possible?
- e. Knowing what you know, how would you have done/do it differently?

(Great! If it's a new idea that nobody's done yet, send it our way.)

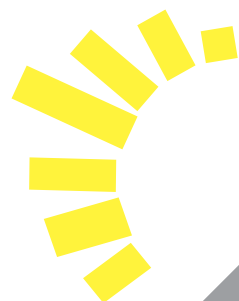
ROLL THE DICE TO PICK A PREVIOUS CHAPTER

Bringing ideas to life and taking them from a vision to action without getting too hung up on hallucination requires having an incredible amount of perseverance and self-belief. It also means being surrounded by great people. **A creative culture is one in which people aren't just rewarded for successes, but are allowed and actively encouraged to experiment and make mistakes.**

We can create environments to make those chance ideas more likely by doing simple things like keeping notebooks for capturing ideas and conducting idea jam sessions that demonstrate a system-wide commitment to brave ideas; by embracing playfulness and risk-taking; and by hiring people in the organisation who go against the grain and even don't seem to fit. People are motivated to be creative in organisations by extrinsic rewards like money, recognition and even just the expectation of needing to be creative, and by intrinsic rewards such as the personal challenge or by intellectual curiosity, and the best business playground depends on creating the right mix of these things in a collaborative environment with a shared clear vision.

Instructions

1. Pick the one idea you want to launch.
2. You have 30 minutes to write a launch plan for it.
3. Give your idea a name and a look.
4. Write it up as a news story explaining the idea, what it does and who it's for.
5. Describe who else you can bring in to collaborate with to make it happen.



What's my mission?

What am I called?

Who is on the crew?

BOARD GAME: BLAST OFF!

How it works: Launching your idea is as important as coming up with it in the first place! So without much further ado, let's start the countdown and get it into orbit. Commencing countdown, engines on.

Ten ... nine ... eight ...

In this game players have to quickly choose *just one* from a bunch of ideas, make sure all the pieces are in place and then launch it into the market.

Seven ... six ... five ...

You won't know if it's exactly the right idea, but the time is ripe for a bit of exploration into the unknown.

Four ... three ... two ... one.

Blast off!

How to play: When in 1948 Albert became the first monkey in space he was charting unknown territory. Unfortunately, he died of suffocation during the flight. But, that aside, he was a pioneer! And a shade under 11 years and a few dozen monkeys later Able and Miss Baker, a rhesus monkey and a squirrel monkey, became the first living creatures to go into space and successfully return to Earth. In the next few years, a collection of chimps, mice, guinea pigs, frogs, rats, cats, a few insects, a tortoise and some dogs followed them up. In fact, by the time Yuri Gagarin, a Russian and a human, went into space in 1961 pretty much the whole animal world had taken a

look. So here's a nod of acknowledgement to little Albert and his bravery in going for it. We raise a banana to you.

Now it's your turn to go into the unknown, this time without suffocating, we hope. The game involves quickly choosing one of your ideas and doing some of the things you'd need to do if you were going to launch it for real, by giving your idea a clear mission, a story and a crew who can help make it happen.

From ideas they've already generated, players choose quickly just one, based on gut instinct or even just randomly (the *Kill the Idea* game is a good way to hone in on one). The decision has to be made quickly, the countdown has begun. Now we're going to bring the idea to life by deciding what to call it, how to pitch it and who to involve to make it work. And all within 30 minutes.

Who am I? To take your idea from words on a scrap of paper we need to give it an identity. A name, however gimmicky, and a sketch or diagram of what it might look like, however scrappy, will make your idea into something that is tangible, one that *you can imagine actually happening*. Come up with a name that communicates the main characteristics of the idea (e.g. Super Glue) or conveys a sense of its purpose (e.g. Nike was the Greek goddess of strength, speed and victory). Think about who it's aimed at, what it will make them feel and how it's better or different from the

competition. The sketch can be as simple as a crude line drawing that suggests your idea's form (whether a product, a service or experience).

What's the mission? All ideas have to have a practical application with real goals, a clear plan and criteria for success. Write up the idea as a short news story with a punchy headline and the key details about what the idea is about, what the point of it is and who it's aimed at.

Who is on the crew? It's almost impossible to do it alone: we need to partner with others who buy into our mission and are willing to help us accomplish it. Make a list of the people (or monkeys) in your organisation and from the outside who you can collaborate with to launch your idea.

How to win: Create a full launch plan within 30 minutes.

Now let's go and launch an idea for real!



'Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.'
Mark Twain