

3 Creativity and innovation

The opening questions

- Are you more or less creative now compared with when you were a child?
- Are you more or less curious now compared with when you were a child?
- Are you a creator or an innovator? (Do you prefer to *think* or *do* . . . and could you do both?)

Be mindful of the difference between *creativity and innovation*

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.

Pablo Picasso

The creative freedom and innate curiosity enjoyed by the child is consistently reduced as they pass through the education system. This is not only through rules or development targets shaping the actions of the child, but a reduction in opportunities for creative pursuits with subjects such as drama, music and art being squeezed out of the curriculum (Jeffreys, 2018, BBC News). When the leader seeks to engage creativity and innovation from his or her team, they can be faced with not only blank stares, but fear. Taking a mindful approach can help alleviate this and reignite the flame of inspiration.

In the previous chapter, the differences between *insight* and *non-insight* problems were discussed, so too must the difference between *creativity* and *innovation*. This is because: ‘Organisations often chase creativity, but what they really need to pursue is innovation’ (Marshall, 2013) . . . and, conversely, sometimes, creativity is hindered by the desire for innovation.

Creativity is:

- subjective
- immeasurable.

Innovation is:

- introducing change into a relatively stable system
- the work needed to make an idea viable (the *application* of the creative resource).

(Marshall, 2013)

The two terms often are used interchangeably, as an innovation starts with a creative idea. However, this chapter will look at the effect of mindfulness on:

1. The generation of creativity.
2. The process of applying the idea to invoke change.

Mindfulness and the creative process

Goh (2016) defines creativity as ‘. . . producing something new and useful’. She breaks the processes of the creative brain into four processes:

- preparation
- incubation
- illumination
- verification.

She further suggests that mindfulness plays a large role, especially in the first three stages (while making us more accepting of criticism in the fourth). Schootstra *et al.* (2017) suggest that 10 minutes of mindful meditation prior to brainstorming can enhance results and Goh (2016) emphasises how heightened awareness can help within the incubation and illumination period as you are developing the idea.

However, it is notable that, while you may subscribe to this idea in theory, finding the time and space for meditation before brainstorming can be difficult, especially if teams are remote and time is short. But, research suggests that the act of mindful meditation (even without direct focus) can still reveal improvements in creativity, even if teams learn the technique and practise it before bed (Shallard, 2017).

Ask yourself:

- Do you believe you are open to everything around you?
- Do you believe yourself to be wholly observant?

The first part of exploring creativity is to remember that, even for the person who feels they 'aren't creative', inspiration can come from everything around you – if you choose to observe it.

Try this exercise.

EXERCISE 3.1

You need to offer a report on what is around you – including your periphery. Look around you for 30 seconds.

What did you see?

Did you notice everything that was going on?

Really?

How confident are you that you have a full picture of your immediate environment?

But did you look up?

What about down?

What did you hear? Smell? Feel?

Even when instructed to observe your peripherals, you will not always consider looking up or down. Even less likely are you to think about smells, sounds or touch (Beardsley, 2016). Yet, so much information can be gleaned from a full observation which makes use of all the senses. Fixing the draught by closing the door is less effective when there is a hole in the roof. Practising mindfulness just reminds us that there may always be more to consider.

One simple instruction: 'Remember to look up/down' or 'Remember to think about all your senses' can make a big difference in sparking a creative idea.

Now try this.

EXERCISE 3.2

¹You have to fill each box with a different picture in three minutes.

Try it:

¹This is an adaptation of an exercise in Wiseman, R. (2004) *Did You Spot the Gorilla? How to Recognise the Hidden Opportunities in Your Life*. Arrow.

How did you get on?

How about if you think of the following:

- What might inspire a picture if you think about the sky or the ceiling?
- What might inspire a picture if you think about the floor?
- How might a smell inspire a picture? A taste? A touch?

When directed, it is easier to find a spark of inspiration which can then lead to even more ideas. In his example of this exercise, Wiseman directed his teams to think about what a child might draw or what an astronaut might draw to inspire ideas.

If you sometimes reject creative tasks because of low self-belief in your talent, this task enables you to draw inspiration from a different perspective. This can also be helpful when you are looking at a problem from the point of view of the client; and it will be something which the section on ‘Jugaard’ will also acknowledge.

Dealing with emotional biases in creativity

Sometimes, generating the creative spark is not enough; the leader also has to overcome emotional biases when it comes to expressing the team’s creative thinking.

1 Preparation

‘People think “What if my idea is a total flop?” or “What if someone steals it and makes millions?”’ (Pfannkuch, 2015). These are two of the main reasons why people do not like to express ideas. A third is ‘But it’s not realistic.’ This can sometimes hold you or your team back from verbalising any ideas.

First, it is important to recognise that people can have similar ideas all the time. But, to move from an idea to implementation (and innovation), someone has to do the work to execute it successfully. This also tackles the issue of ‘. . . but it’s not real’ because you are separating the wish to ‘make it’ from the request to ‘. . . come up with an idea’. In asking his team to design a ‘phone with one button’, Steve Jobs did not look for realism at first, he looked for concepts.

The first hurdle of developing creativity and innovation is getting your team to generate, *then* communicate their ideas *in order* for them to be implemented. Mindful practice can help generate the ‘safe space’ for teams to express themselves without fear of ridicule.

Try this.

EXERCISE 3.3

During a brainstorming session, participants are asked to stand in a circle. Tell them that you are holding an invisible ball. The ball will ‘become’ an object of your choice and you will throw it to someone in the circle. They must acknowledge the object that you have chosen before they change it, name it and throw it to someone else.

For example:

I am holding the ball and I say, ‘It’s a cat,’ – I throw it to person B.

Person B ‘catches’ it and says, ‘It’s a cat,’ and then says, ‘It’s a spear,’ and throws it to person C.

Person C catches it and says, ‘It’s a spear,’ and then says, ‘It’s an alien,’ and throws it to person D.

What you sometimes find is that not only is this a fun game, but that participants start acting out catching the object.

While this allows a sense of childhood freedom, which is always conducive to the creative process, you can then debrief the group by explaining that not only were you encouraging creativity, but the most important part was the *acknowledgment of the idea of the other person first before you changed it to your own idea*. This encourages teams to listen to each other, as well as acknowledge that ideas often are inspired by something else.

If you have time to meditate prior to a brainstorming session, there is a short ‘Meditation for creativity track’, which can be downloaded. Go to <https://www.draudreyt.com/meditations>. Mindful meditation can reawaken the almost child-like freedom of creativity (Goh, 2016) – too often stifled as adults – which broadens the mind to other possibilities.

2 Incubation

As an idea develops, it will undergo changes. At this point, Goh advises that simple meditation can also help prevent ‘obsessing’ during the incubation stage, and encourage openness to criticism in verification, which can assist in development of an idea rather than defence of the same.

Sometimes, it can help if teams are able to appreciate the effect of defensiveness on stifling creativity. While the next chapter will focus on collaboration and teamwork (and any exercises are applicable here), this is a simple exercise to facilitate a discussion on the importance of remaining open to idea development.

Try this.

EXERCISE 3.4

In a team session, partners are asked to label themselves A and B. A is to start a conversation using a suggestion. B is to reply, building on that suggestion using ‘Yes and . . .’

For example:

A: Let's go to the zoo.

B: Yes and then we can buy some popcorn.

The exercise continues with A building on the suggestions with 'Yes and . . . ' and so on.

Make it clear that the suggestions can be whatever participants like.

Then run the exercise again, this time with A making suggestions, but B always answering with 'No'. This forces A to continue the conversation alone (and then swap).

Explain that this demonstrates how difficult working together can be when there is constant resistance to ideas and suggestions. If you have time, this is a good opportunity to explore why such 'stonewalling' may occur, if it does.

The act of bringing awareness to the way ego can result in 'stalemate' (and sometimes ill feeling, as can be demonstrated) can help teams understand the importance of being open. A further exploration of why someone may be protective of their idea can help create a safe and trusting space where teams are unafraid to share their thoughts and creativity is not stifled by ego.

3 Illumination

Illumination is akin to innovation – the act of putting something into action. Here, teams have the seed, but they need to bring it to fruition. Mindful meditation has brought positive results in dealing with 'insight' problems, so it can be used again at this point to free the mind in order to accept new ideas into the development of a concept.

4 Verification

Again, a common fear in testing an idea is failure, although most sensible executives are not so insecure as to perceive failure as an endpoint. What is important is that you remind them to identify the root of the problem. Root cause analysis, however, often is feared because it happens following failure rather than being something that is embedded within company behaviour. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) proposed that companies instead create a ‘. . . mindful infrastructure that continually does all of the following:

1. Tracks small failures
2. Resists over simplification
3. Remains sensitive to operations
4. Maintains capabilities for resilience
5. Takes advantage of shifting locations of expertise.’

(Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007)

This approach meant that making minor mistakes was acceptable, teams engaged in mindful reflection as a matter of course and, most importantly, a proactive approach to actioning ideas was demonstrated so that the task of verification was improved rather than the ability to respond when it went wrong – as it went wrong less (Latino, 2013).

Creativity and innovation can be hugely hindered by your emotions – indeed, seeing something you have cared about fail is heart-breaking. Therefore, it is important to encourage a culture of reflection and revision so that improvements are made as a matter of course. In turn, this is likely to result in a much better finished product or performance outcome.

Mindfulness and innovation

Technologies are tools, and you can use them to do great things or not.

Eric Schiermeyer, 2011

As an echo to the statement that innovation is the act of *doing something* with the idea, Schiermeyer (2011) went on to say: ‘. . . most successful and innovative tech companies are those that use their own version of mindfulness to listen carefully to what people want and supply it to them.’

Schiermeyer does not define what that ‘version’ might be, but as the section on ‘verification’ (above) suggests, the most effective innovators have a development process that is ‘. . . insightful . . . and carefully constructed’ stemming from ‘. . . the cultivation of wisdom practices’. The organisation that works mindfully from the start improves not just the result, but the methods of application of processes or design and, in turn, is the fastest to capture its audience.

Creativity alone is not enough; you have to listen to the needs of your clients, remain sensitive to changes within them and work within a process that takes this all into account – and is flexible enough to adapt as needed. Rather than continually ‘pushing’ your ideas onto them, find out what they want and incorporate that into your design.

Ask yourself:

- Do you know what your clients’ needs are?
- How have they changed over the last three years?
- How equipped are you (professionally and technologically) to address those changes successfully now and in the next three years?

Schultz (2014) suggests that one way to give yourself an innovation mindfulness check is to take a look at the cues within your environment.

Try this exercise.

EXERCISE 3.5

Look around you and make a mental note, not only of what you see, but what it might indicate. If, for example, your workspace is untidy – what might that mean? If you have certain files out – is there a reason for it? If there is something still on a to-do list, what is it a reminder of?

Ask your teams to do the same within their workspaces. What do they notice? Are they lacking certain resources? What effect does this have?

What is the evidence telling you about your organisation at the moment?

Tournier and Ferring (2017) suggested that innovation was also enhanced by avoiding automatic responses and categories. Teams were instructed to note their immediate response, but also to consider an alternative. The same was true when they were asked to offer a solution. This act of mindfulness encouraged a more informative dialogue with clients as well as an awareness of a variety of solutions.

Try this exercise.

EXERCISE 3.6

1. Note your immediate response to a client request, but also consider an alternative response.
2. Note your immediate solution, but also consider an alternative with no restriction (i.e. if money/time/technology were no object.)

Ask your teams to do the same.²

²This is an adaptation of the task that Tournier and Ferring (2017) proposed.

This will bring you similar information to that which Tournier and Ferring found, but may also offer you ways in which your service could be improved.

If your organisation is equipped, then you are ready to innovate.

Disruptive innovation

There is no point innovating without it making an impact and organisations tend to want to create disruption, placing their innovation at the forefront of their field. There are many ways to do this, but the most straightforward approach is Perry Timms' (2018) 'three-part' method for disruptive innovation:

Innovation at the	Innovation in the	Innovation that is
<i>core</i>	<i>adjacent</i>	<i>transformative</i>

Innovation at the *core* involves a development of something which already exists, perhaps something central to the business itself. This may involve making a lead product bigger or creating it with a higher specification – or even a new colour – to meet the client or customer needs.

Innovation in the *adjacent* is being aware of the trends within the industry, especially those underground or slightly less mainstream with a following, then bringing the creators into the organisation forming collaboration.

Disruptive, or *transformative*, innovation often involves a leap from the familiar into either new territory or a completely different product. This may derive from adjacent or core innovation, but the move from your current business to the new is less linear.

However, teams – or sometimes other leaders whom you need to convince – are often fearful of transformative innovation as it marks a departure from the familiar, but can sometimes be assisted through the process.

Try this exercise.

EXERCISE 3.7

Play your team (or those you need to bring on side) a piece of traditional music (e.g. Pachelbel's Canon in D major) and ask them what sort of dance would fit with it.³

Play a hip hop beat song and ask them what sort of dance would fit with it.

Ask them if a modern style would fit the traditional music and vice versa – would a traditional style fit the hip hop dance?

Ask them what they would do if a client wanted the hip hop style to the traditional music.

³This exercise is a variation on one presented by Anastasia Tomara at the Learning and Development Conference in Athens, 30 January 2018.

Having done this in my own work, I have found that, despite thinking at first that this 'won't work', teams demonstrate the three-stage process by looking first at the 'core', adapting what they already know, e.g. adding a beat or speeding up the music. Next, they draw from experiences of fusions, e.g. cultures where tradition is commonly mixed with modern. Finally, they are comfortable with proposing something 'disruptive', e.g. proposing 'reversible outfits' or scenery reflecting the styles and they appreciate that often this improves the original piece.

EXERCISE 3.7 CONTINUED

Then play any of the 46 modern songs which feature the Canon which can be found here: www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1F978713F38AD934, particularly *We Dance On* (N-Dubz featuring Bodyrox), if using the hip hop example.

Ask them to think about how the progression of the music occurred and how the dance progressed. Did it happen simultaneously?

What allows the music to fuse?

How have the differing styles (in dance and music) helped create something even more effective?

An excellent song for examining a fusion of a number of hits from the Pachelbel Canon to modern day is *Ladies and Gentlemen We are Floating in Space* by Spiritualized. This may even lead to a discussion on other fusions, e.g. cuisine, fashion, architecture; and go some way to bridging the gap between what your team is comfortable with and progressing into the unknown.

Once your team is better able to accept the fear of disruption because of the progress it makes, greater creativity is entertained and innovation is championed.

Jugaad and innovation

However, the mindful leader is also able to push both creativity and innovation a step further. In their book *Jugaad Innovation*, Radjou *et al.* (2012) discussed the need for an incubator for premature babies in developing countries. The cost for a Western incubator was over \$20,000 and, because they needed electricity, this could also prove dangerous. Considerations such as placing babies under lightbulbs were discussed and dismissed on the grounds of safety, so the

design team went to see what the needs of the clients were. They realised that the clients in this case were not the doctors in the hospitals, but the families in the villages without any access to electricity. Setting these parameters, they came up with the ‘portable infant warmer’. Based on the ‘kangaroo care’ of keeping the infant in a pouch, this was a sleeping bag with an electric heater.

At only \$200, this was an affordable solution.



FIGURE 3.1 Portable infant warmer

While not all organisations will face the issue of money, taking a Jugaad approach (subtitled ‘frugal and flexible’) can be invaluable to the creative – and latter innovative – process. How often do organisations create and innovate in one specific way, just because that’s the way it’s always done, or just because that’s the only way they know?

By setting different parameters, for example, resources, materials, cost and clarifying the specific end user and their needs, you can encourage teams to be flexible with their approach and may create – and innovate – something even more useful than if they had remained on their habitual path.

Further, this practice will encourage your teams to think broadly as a matter of course and, in the same way as the creative spark can be ignited by perceiving through different eyes, what better to innovate frugally than looking at how nature (in this case the kangaroo) might do it.

You will notice that of all the suggestions in this chapter, there is limited use of meditation. However, meditation does have its place in innovation since, as with problem solving, a clear mind is a more capable mind (Barak, 2016). As such, you may wish to use any of the meditations for peace and clarity which accompany this book to generate insight and peace.

IN SUMMARY

1. Mindfulness gives permission to engage in a child-like state of creativity.
2. There is a difference between creativity and innovation. In order to create disruption, you need to have the idea and be able to implement it.
3. Creativity can be enhanced by directed awareness and/or looking through different perspectives. These 'perspectives' are not just those of the client or customer, they can also be of 'a child' or 'an astronaut' or anything – just to stimulate wider thought.
4. Meditation can calm the mind prior to a creative or brainstorming session, but it also enhances insight so, when being able to innovate poses a problem, meditation may help clear the mind for the 'a-ha' moment.
5. Part of a successful creative process is breaking down the psychological barriers that teams have, e.g. fear of getting it wrong or fear of someone 'stealing' their idea. A place for mindful meditation or relaxation helps create a safe space for exploring creativity, as can exercises which teach listening and acknowledgment.

6. Organisations must also keep their implementation processes working efficiently, and mindful awareness can help ensure that problems are reported rather than avoided or ignored.
7. Part of a successful innovative process is to understand the problem that you are trying to solve and generate ideas from there – sometimes using the process of Jugaad for flexibility and clarity of the specific end user.

CHAPTER 3 TOOLKIT



- Organisations which understand the difference between creativity and innovation can exploit both; when one is lacking, successes may be fewer or narrow.
- However, great leaps in both creativity and innovation can be found in the organisation that utilises ‘Jugaad’ – frugality and flexibility.

Key points to remember

1. *Always* set yourself up to innovate (but provide the motivation to create through creating a safe space in which to do so).
2. *Sometimes* look around within your field to see what groups may be of help in a creatively ‘disruptive’ collaboration.
3. *Try to* avoid setting limits or constraints on creativity.

Take action

1. Practise Jugaad

When you are looking to innovate, think about the *purpose* of the creation. Then see if you can identify anything similar in nature.

Nature is often the most efficient worker, so look at what you can learn from its already streamlined processes.

- 2. Try ‘pull’ creativity and innovation** Speak to the client, team or ‘end user’ about what they need and begin your creative process from that standpoint rather than looking at what other similar organisations are ‘giving’ to clients or what you think they need.

You might be able to merge your findings, but when you give people what they want – and they can identify as that having been done – they are more positively predisposed.

What I tried

Date	Action

What worked for me

Date	Action

Please use a separate piece of paper if necessary.

Meditation techniques

Meditation for creativity

Find a comfortable place and shut your eyes. Sit relaxed and take deep breaths in and out. As you relax, begin to focus on the sounds around you. What can you hear that you normally filter out? Acknowledge the sound and let it pass. Continue to breathe deeply.

Now think about the sensations that you feel – the feel of the clothing you are wearing – how it sits on your body, the feel of your hands in your lap or on your knees – is your touch heavy or light?

How does the atmosphere feel? Are you pleasantly warm? Cool? Feel the air surrounding you. Now smell that air, what fragrances can you smell – perhaps it's lunch time, perhaps it's the fresh air of the open window.

Now think about what you can taste and how your mouth feels, all the time breathing slowly and gently.

Remember to use as many senses as you can when you are opening your mind to create, there is no right or wrong, only ideas.

Remind yourself that you can use your awareness of everything around you to help you become more creative.

Slowly, I will count backwards from five and, as I do, you will become more and more aware of everything around you and how it feels, how it looks, sounds, tastes – your senses will be awakened and help you: create, five, becoming more aware of the sounds, four, the smells, three, the tastes, two, the touch, one – you are energised and ready to create.

Meditation for peace and clarity

Make sure you are somewhere you will not be disturbed. Switch off your phone and close your computer. This is a

time where you can find peace and clarity without the distractions of the day.

Sit or lie somewhere comfortable.

When you are ready, we will begin this guided meditation.

Start by focusing on your breathing. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

As you breathe in, you feel the cool, fresh, relaxing air enter your body and, as you breathe out, you breathe out all the stress, tensions and demands of the day.

Breathe in, breathe out. With every breath you relax a little more.

You begin this guided meditation in a beautiful forest. The sun is glistening through the trees, you can hear the birds singing. There is a little stream running by full of fresh sparkling water.

You can smell the beautiful flowers and feel a cool breeze.

You see a small path and begin to walk down it. Feel the grass beneath your feet. Even if the terrain is uneven, you walk with confidence, firmly moving forward.

While you are walking, you can still take a moment to enjoy the beauty around you – the freshness of the breeze, the melody of the birds, the warmth of the sun. You are confident and relaxed.

As you walk, you see a pathway leading up a mountain. You begin to walk upwards – just as confidently as you did in the forest.

The air is fresh, the sun is warm and you walk with strength.

With each breath you are more and more energised.

As you climb higher, the sky gets bluer and your mind gets clearer. Your breathing keeps you energised. Your steps are confident.

You come upon a clearing. It has a beautiful view and a very comfortable place for you to sit.

You are energised by the blue of the sky, the warmth of the sun on the clearing and the colours of the flowers around you.

You sit, comfortable and relaxed.

You breathe that fresh mountain air.

Your mind is at peace here.

You can see things clearly here.

You are safe here.

Breathe that fresh mountain air.

The sun feels warm, the breeze feels fresh and you feel at peace.

Breathe in and out and enjoy that feeling.

You can spend as much time as you like here. This is your place to think. You can come back here whenever you want to.

Breathe in and out and enjoy that feeling of peace.

When you are here, you see things clearly. You observe them as if from outside and this gives you a new perspective.

You can accept what you cannot change yet, and you are energised to take action where you can.

Breathe in the energy of the fresh air, letting it flow through you and breathe out. With each breath you renew your strength and you renew your focus.

Enjoy that feeling for a moment.

When you are ready, you leave the clearing and make your way down the mountain. You keep that feeling of energy with you and you walk with strength and confidence.

Whatever you are facing today – you are strong enough.

As you reach the bottom, notice the firmness of the ground supporting you. Begin to become aware of the room you are in and the firmness of the ground or chair supporting you.

Retain that feeling of clarity and energy as I count backwards from five. Five, start wiggling your fingers and toes, four, start moving your legs and arms, three, awaken your neck and head, two, take a strong energised stretch, one, when you are ready, open your eyes, ready to return to your day.