

CREATIVITY UN-LTD

Eight creative actions for more success

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Happy New Year to all readers of "Creativity Un-Ltd", and welcome to the Twenty Tens. The majority of business gurus and futurists agree that in the coming decade, innovation and creativity will decide more than ever which companies and individuals will thrive in business. How can you succeed in the "Era of Ideanomics" (the phrase coined by Alan Greenspan)? Follow these eight creative tips to flourish in the innovation economy.

1. Ideate more. Whenever you face a tough challenge and need ideas on how to resolve the situation, start by formulating the issue as a "How to?" sentence ("How to get more creative to succeed in the 2010s?") and then jot down at least 25 ideas. "When you write down your ideas you automatically focus your full attention on them. Few if any of us can write one thought and think another at the same time. Thus a pencil and paper make excellent concentration tools," as the US business author Michael Leboeuf noted. If the problem relates to your business, ask your team members to do the same, and then kick off a brainstorming session where you generate more ideas (and hit an idea quota of 200-300 ideas).

2. Create as much as possible. One of the secrets of creative genius is to create as much output as possible. Why? Quantity breeds quality. Chances that you'll have some masterpieces among all your creative output increase with the overall amount you produce. For example, Ludwig van Beethoven wrote nine symphonies, and he lives on because of his ingenious Third, Fifth and Ninth Symphonies that are masterpieces.

3. Write and draw more. Are you a tech geek and computer fan? While I love and heavily use my MacBook Pro and iPhone, I do all my important conceptual and creative thinking "offline". I firmly believe that you can more easily connect to your creative potential by going analog more often. So instead of opening the computer, start with a large clean white piece of paper (or on an empty white page in your notebook), and then write, sketch, draw, doodle, map out, conceptualise and structure your thoughts on paper. There is always time later to transcribe your creative thoughts and ideas to a digital format later on, but first do your thinking on paper.

4. Move more. Albert Einstein said: "Nothing happens until something moves." What's true in physics (for objects in motion) is true for business too. In our fast-changing world, become more proactive and move first. Initiate change instead of responding to change.

In business, moving more requires you to establish a more action-oriented culture in your firm. On the private side, moving more means getting out of your comfort zone and cultivating creativity-boosting activities such as yoga, walking, running, or doing meditation.

5. Fail more. "Every error is an opportunity to learn. Just don't commit the same mistake again and again - that is stupidity. But commit as many new mistakes as you are capable of, and don't be afraid, because that is the only way nature allows you to learn," advised the Indian spiritual teacher Osho. Creation and evolution are built on the principles of trial and error and negative feedback. Innovation techniques such as rapid prototyping apply exactly the same principles and help you to fail earlier to succeed sooner. If you want to become more innovative, plan to fail more often and quickly, and learn what works as you move forward from learning cycle to learning cycle. As the US science fiction writer Ray Bradbury noted: "Life is trying things to see if they work." So is creation.

6. Collect and connect more dots. "Creativity is just connecting things," believes Apple's Steve Jobs, a master at connecting the dots between the seemingly disconnected. Make sure that in the 2010s, you and your colleagues collect enough dots to connect with your business issues. Therefore, broaden your life experiences by meeting new people, travelling to new locations, learning new skills and knowledge, reading more, doing what you've always wanted to do (or what you've been afraid to do), and so on.

7. Play more and have more fun. "I never did a days work in my life, it was all fun," commented the legendary inventor and workaholic Thomas Alva Edison. Creativity, fun and playfulness go hand in hand. Young children play every day, and they are highly creative. So cultivate a positive and playful approach to life and business, and play more. "I think it's a misguided sense that work and play are like opposite things, and that if you're playing, you can't be working. I think that the ultimate goal - and I would go pretty far into the direction of that goal here - is to make the work play," commented Tom Kelley, general manager of the industrial design company Ideo.

8. Imagine and dream more. Albert Einstein noted that "Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life's coming attractions." In a decade that is likely to see even more changes than the past one, make sure that you take more time to imagine possible future scenarios for yourself and your business. While others get bogged down in the details of their lives and jobs, keep an open eye on the big picture to ensure that you see the forest from the trees. Then dream up and envision your creative responses to possible changes that you've spotted on the horizon, and create attraction for yourself and your business.

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