

Creative thinking: A way to thrive an Unpredictable World

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In today's world, most of the professional jobs require creative thinking which in simple terms just means every job requires its job holder to come up with something new. Creative thinking is a skill that is mandatory and required in the future of work for the employees to fit and thrive. This skill is key when shared with one's employers or prospective employers however, to do this you should be able to recognise your own creativity. Creative thinking means looking at something from a new and fresh perspective (The Balance Careers, 2020). It's not enough to stick to the tried and tested to push a business forward or even help keep it secure and safe. Research at the Yale School of Management projects that by 2027, 75% of leading US companies will lose their place in today's unknown firms. This means that simple, adaptable and innovative thinking is needed to succeed in a time of ever-changing technology and needs.

Creative thinking is thinking outside the box and there is a need to be strategic about the way one thinks as most people are used to routine stuff. Thank God our brains recognise patterns in our thinking which it stores and calls them out when there is a need. These are great for daily decision making and small tasks we do on a daily basis such as brushing our teeth or making tea. However, routine ways of thinking when faced with a new problem frequently lead us to unimaginative ideas. We need to avoid relying on these trends and creating new techniques for our thoughts if we want to move away from the unimaginative and towards the innovative. You need a strategy to help you change your way of thinking and unleash your creativity. You may think it is only for artists and musicians to strive to be more creative, but the fact is that creativity is a skill you need, whatever your career is.

We live in a fast-changing world that is not as predictable as our routine thinking and unimaginative ideas. The world has so many challenges and opportunities which require out of the ordinary thinking and better solutions daily hence creative thinking is the superpower! In the 2016 [Future of Jobs Report](#), the World Economic Forum described innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving as the three most important skills for success in the workforce in 2020. However, to develop better-thinking strategies to build the essential creative skills first is identifying the thinking patterns that are holding us back. Too bad we have become too used to the thinking patterns that we repress new fresh ideas. There are three types of thinking that suppress our creativity which are:

- Selective thinking
- Reactive thinking
- Assumptive thinking

Selective thinking is a process in which a person selects a favourable idea over other ideas. It makes people choose ideas that seem to be the safest leaving them convinced that they know what is good and what is bad. In the 1920s, Henry Ford sold over 60 per cent of all cars in the US (Griffiths and Costi, n.d.). However, the market started to change and the customers wanted more features and colours but he

refused on changing his approach and continued developing black cars with limited features to reduce his manufacturing costs. Henry Ford's selective thinking of continuously pursuing his current business model costed him when other General Motors started manufacturing what the customers wanted.

Henry Ford fired one of his employees who reached out to him advising him to manufacture what the customers wanted. His reactive thinking cost him a great market share. This is the reason why we need to take time to carefully consider any next moves or ideas before we could be victims of reactive thinking. **Reactive thinking** drives people to quickly push out ideas with an aim to beat everyone else. Although being first sounded great, this can be a disadvantage as you may do less rational decision making that could actually cost you more.

To unleash your creativity you should avoid **assumptive thinking**. This is basing ideas and decisions on past experiences and knowledge. This may be good to a certain extent however, it stops us from trying other ways of doing things or getting new information which would mostly lead to creative thinking. Taking note of these three types of thinking that repress our creative thinking is key to unleashing the creativity within us. You are allowed to take as much time as you need to understand a given problem or challenge and come up with a creative solution.

To conquer and thrive using creative thinking in this unpredictable world there is a need to dig deeper. A great start is defining the problem and clarifying what you know about it and what you do not know about it. You should explicitly state the challenge as it is and describes what would be a good enough outcome for a best-case scenario (Griffiths and Costi, n.d.). Document all these assumptions you might want to make in the process, pushing aside any ideas that pop up as they can wait. Doing this gives a good indication of what information gaps you need to fill and it eventually prepares you to ask questions and be curious like a little child. Toyota has been using a similar model since the 1930s, consistently asking what, why, where, who, when, and how. This allows them to get the underlying data about any problem or issue they have and also new insights are derived from this.

Even though creative thinking is a skill crucial in the future of work as highlighted by the World Economic forum in their [Future of Jobs Report](#) of 2016, it just doesn't happen. Most of you have been in brainstorming sessions which you enter and leave without giving any suggestion or idea. As mentioned earlier in this article, there is a need to have strategic thinking to enhance your creativity and participate in such setups. A 1990 study at New York State University found that groups which provided instructions for brainstorming created nearly three times as many good ideas as groups which did not (Griffiths and Costi, n.d.). In 2008 a survey was conducted by creative agency Idea Champions to find out when people are getting their best ideas and the survey results showed that collaborating with people and working alone were both catalysts for great ideas. Therefore, since the team is expected to work together, incorporating some alone time into the session also helps bring out new ideas.

You need confidence, a solid plan and a constant supply of imagination to make your idea come alive. Having gone through multiple steps and ideation sessions and finally having the solution to your challenge, you will probably feel like the work is done and you'll be able to take a break from all thinking. It is certainly an achievement to discover a star concept, but you will need more imagination to bring it to life, as well as a plan of action. A research study at California's Dominican University asked

149 participants either to write down their goals or just talk about them. 76 per cent of those who had placed their goals in writing actually achieved them at the end of the study, compared with just 43 per cent of those who had made mental notes. The first attempt by Walt Disney to create an animation company led to bankruptcy, not to mention a 302-fold discouraging rejection before getting the funding to set up Disney world. Without confidence, the Walt Disney creators would have given up at the first hurdle.

When the tough times are over, and you can finally take on your idea's popularity, you will need to keep up with the imagination and channel it to continually improve your solution. Follow the team's lead behind Angry Birds, the best-selling paying game in history. They iterated on the idea thousands of times and they continued to innovate with different levels and versions of the game, toys, books and a movie, even after the game was launched. Their success is evidence of the value of creative thinking long after the initial ideation. You can't put your imagination on a shelf like any other talent and expect it to develop. If you want to make it part of how you work, you have to be intentional about fostering it (Griffiths and Costi, n.d.). If you have much on your hands or work in a fast-paced world, it certainly doesn't sound like something you can do to make time to practise your imagination. Yet consider the fact that many big businesses, such as Apple, LinkedIn and Intuit, are preparing time for workers to explore new ideas and side projects openly.

Research shows organisational fun boosts innovation and creativity. Researchers at the University of Western Ontario, Canada, noticed that individuals exposed to positive videos and music clips became more versatile in their thought and were better at solving tricky problems. Another survey of employees in the UK revealed that those who had fun at work scored higher in creativity than those who had not had fun at all. Making time for fun and other innovative elements will take you to a place where creativity is not a process but a normal way to work. Whether you're running a business or trying to advance your career, you're expected to benefit from that. Creativity may sound like an ability with which only some people are born, but the fact is that anybody can become more creative. Through learning how to think differently and going through the process from understanding all the way to execution, you can develop the skills to take on any task in an innovative and effective manner.

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