
Foreword

The words creativity and management have been around for a long time (both words arguably have sixteenth-century etymological origins), but it is only relatively recently that the two words have become conjoined in meaning (and very closely allied to studies of innovation and entrepreneurship). A major reason for this focus on creativity and management is because (as the editors of this book make clear) creativity generates lasting value (social and economic) as a result of a process of 'bisociation', which entails the making of unexpected connections between apparently opposing frames of reference to address problems or to take advantage of emerging opportunities (Koestler 1964). This is not a new idea, but it is a good one that has been neglected of late, so it is pleasing to see it utilised so thoroughly in this handbook.

There has been a great deal of debate recently, predominantly from those with an economics background, to argue that, broadly, the world is slowing down both in terms of the generation of innovative products and services and in terms of the contribution to the economy that such innovations provide. Gordon's (2000) test of un-inventiveness, for example, argues that the creation of the toilet transformed the lives of billions and that it would be difficult to find a more modern innovation that had an equivalent impact. Gordon also argues that creativity at the turn of the twentieth century was at something of a peak, producing cars, aeroplanes, radio, telephones and antibiotics. The central argument of this thesis is that the pace of innovation has allegedly slowed down in modern times.

I would disagree, since we can not only view creativity as production, as economists predominantly do, but also as consumption. Creativity is a broad social process and not just the production of new things. It is this dual aspect of creativity as both production and consumption that links creativity into virtually all aspects of organisation (strategy, structure, operations and marketing, to name only a few key areas). This book addresses all of these areas (and more) and that is why it is a timely and useful addition to the literature in this field.

Production (favoured by the economists) focuses on achieving innovation, competitive advantage and social benefits by enhancing the 'level' of creativity in the organisation to produce innovative products and services. This, typically, involves looking at entrepreneurship, for example developing a post-Fordist organisational context in which creativity might be

fostered (including flexible production and work, moves to niche production aimed at specific groups, globalisation and the international division of labour). It also focuses on the systemic nature of systems (collectivities of organised efforts coupled with the physical environment) to see how the systemic tendencies that gravitate toward stability might be interrupted to stimulate creative actions which, in turn, produce innovative products and services (Kanter 1999). This approach has prompted some scholars (for example, Sternberg 1999, Weisberg 2006, Sawyer 2006) to argue that creativity should result in something that is new and has value (often described in managerial terminology as fit for purpose, or useful).

The creation and the development of the Swatch watch is a good example of creative production. In the 1970s the Swiss watch-making industry, world renowned for its precision, quality watches, was in crisis. In ten years its export market had dropped by half, with Hong Kong and Japan occupying the top spots. In 1978 the Japanese introduced a watch that was only 2 millimetres thick. Switzerland's largest watch group, ASUAG, rose to the challenge and developed a gold watch that was just 0.98 millimetres thick. This was a success and inspired further research at ASUAG to make a slim affordable watch case entirely of plastic. This meant bringing together different technologies (including display technologies from the computer industry) to make Swatch possible to produce. There are now some 30 different and successful designs (such as Scuba, Irony series, Skin, Beat, Bijoux).

The development of the 'iPod for the heart' is also a good example of creative production. This product (which looks like an iPod) uses iPod technology and design to monitor, screen and diagnose heart functions (your own personal ambulatory heart monitor with instant analysis). The previous 12-lead electro-cardiogram was invented in 1942 and is still used today. The first 'portable' electro-cardiogram was invented in 1928 and weighed 50lb. The iPod for the heart was created by two individuals working in the health service who saw the experiential advantages to the consumer and to healthcare professionals if iPod technology could be adapted to a different end use. Cardionetics was formed as a company with two models launched in 2006 with immediate take-up from healthcare professions recommending this product to patients. New models have subsequently followed with demand outstripping supply.

However, creativity lies not just in what we produce, but also in what – and how – we consume. The societal shift from production to consumption is also reflected in the fields of creativity. Consumerism has created a number of fundamental (creative) changes, including the massive growth of shopping malls: shopping as a major leisure activity in itself and the rapid growth of commodities. We now 'need' and use commodities we

could not imagine only a few years ago (e.g. shower gels, foot creams, skin products, computer games and other gadgets). Consumerism has also influenced the attachment of identity to shopping (where we shop matters, especially for youthful consumers) and creative marketing by many retailers appeals directly to this identity. Some social theorists argue that consumerism has enriched life by creating a greater range of goods and services. We have great choice over which goods and services we buy and use (supermarkets sell ingredients and recipes unheard of 20 years ago) and we can now participate to a much greater extent in creative activities such as music, DIY, painting, cooking and a wide range of hobbies.

Not available when the toilet was invented are, of course, information technologies and other computer-based technologies which are used globally. Computers have the power to shape and develop both production and consumption relationships and thus play an important and integral role in both creativity and management. Individuals can make decisions, influence others and make connections worldwide, often without leaving their seat. For example, the extent of online shopping (consumption) was around 10 billion transactions (automated, debit and credit card) in the UK in 2012 and it would be a rare production or service organisation that had no computer-based technologies at all. Computers allow and facilitate creativity previously not possible and the spread of globalisation means that many more clever and inventive individuals from rapidly emerging economies have joined the innovation game. We are likely to see rapid and creative advances as a result in fields as diverse as driverless cars, medical care and three-dimensional printing.

At least two further key issues impinge on creativity and management. One is the question of value and the other is the question of how creativity itself is managed and regulated at macro levels (i.e. by governments). It is important to remember that value is a relative term and creativity may not always be good for all. For example, post-Fordist flexible firms utilising such 'novel' techniques as offshoring, teleworking or crowdsourcing can be seen as a creative solution to organisational and economic problems, but can also be seen as exploitative (particularly of labour), self-serving for the powerful (e.g. Enron) or guilty of poor governance when responsibility and accountability is passed from senior managers to the more junior individual or 'remote' work group.

Similarly, creativity in consumption can be argued to destroy traditional cultures and regional solidarities. The dominance of markets and self-gratification has led to a general 'flattening' (McDonaldisation) of life – destroying differences and communities (Seabrook 1996, Ritzer 1993, 2010). In addition, Veblen's (1899/1925) theory of conspicuous consumption suggested that consumption and its display are not open to all.

You can cook a creative meal (for example) but you need enough money to buy the high-quality ingredients and you need to be able to access the shops. You also need the knowledge of how to buy the ingredients and how to prepare the creative meal. In other words, contemporary consumption allows some individuals and groups to be creative but excludes others.

Finally, government plays an important role in either helping foster or suppressing creativity. Many of the world's leading economies are more heavily regulated than they were a century ago. They may be safer and cleaner places in which to live and work, but when governments imposed less regulation, innovation was arguably easier. Of course, this is a delicate balance. De-regulation rarely happens except in extreme circumstances (such as war), where there have been step changes in innovation from radar, through medicine and the jet engine to drones. De-regulation is furthermore often succeeded by re-regulation (as in the European broadcasting industries). It is also a positive thing that governments regulate drugs and emissions from cars and factories, yet public spending on infrastructure and basic research (the seed corn of many innovations including the development of the computer and the Internet) has dwindled significantly, leading some to claim that the twenty-first century is not as readily open to innovation as the twentieth.

Creativity and management have moved a long way from the days when critics would dismiss creativity as meaningless jargon (or management speak). But we have also moved away from a view that creativity is just about making new products (such as toilets and airplanes) towards one where it may also be about new services, relationships, experiences *and* products (or any permeable combination of these). Consequently, despite, and perhaps enabled by, the new environment I have described above, creativity will have to be managed more creatively. In other words, the old modes of creativity with which we became comfortable in the twentieth century may no longer suffice.

This book provides a framework for thinking through such challenges. Chris Bilton and Steve Cummings show not only how creativity is made up of discrete but closely intertwined elements, but also how the clever management of these elements can contribute to organisational strategies, innovation and global exchange, which will ultimately grow and strengthen both the national and the world economy in ways we may not have yet imagined.

Professor David Wilson
Associate Dean, Research, Open University Business School,
The Open University
May 2013

REFERENCES

- Gordon, R.J. (2000), 'Does the "New Economy" measure up to the great inventions of the past?', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, **14**(4), 49–74.
- Kanter, R.M. (1999), 'Change in everyone's job: managing the extended enterprise in a globally extended world', *Organizational Dynamics*, **28**(1), 7–23.
- Koestler, A. (1976[1964]), *The act of creation*, London: Hutchinson.
- Ritzer, G. (1993), *The McDonaldization of society: an investigation into the changing character of contemporary life*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.
- Ritzer, G. (2010), *Globalisation: a basic text*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sawyer, R.K. (2006), *Explaining creativity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seabrook, J. (1996), *In the Cities of the South*, London: Verso.
- Sternberg, R.J., (ed.) (1999), *Handbook of Creativity*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Veblen, T. (1899/1925), *The Theory of the Leisure Class: an economic study of institutions*, London: Allen Unwin.
- Weisberg, R. (2006) *Creativity: understanding innovation in problem-solving, science, invention and the arts*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

