



a-Creativity : i-Creativity

Creativity loves a crisis. Especially at times of crisis we need creativity. Indeed some of the most creative solutions in human endeavour have come about because of a crisis.

But what do we mean exactly, by 'Creativity'? There is artistic creativity: the visual arts, music, literature, design, architecture, film and video, TV and radio, crafts and advertising, for example. These are the kinds of artistic creativity on which the concept of the 'creative industries' is based. Examples of artistic creativity are numerous and obvious: the art of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, the literature of Shakespeare, the music of Mozart. More recently there have been modern classics in design, architecture and cinema.

But there is also a more general kind of creativity, which we might call 'ingenuity', 'innovation', 'invention', 'lateral thinking', or simply 'problem solving'. We can find this kind of creativity in all fields of human activity: for example in science, education, politics, finance, engineering, agriculture, health care and warfare.

Here are just a few illustrations of creativity outside the arts:

Sending steam trains in tunnels under the streets of London to build the first world's first underground railway system;

Providing education by radio to children isolated on farms in the outback through the Australian School of the Air;

Winning Olympic gold in the high jump by leaping over the bar backwards, as Dick Fosbury did;

Online brokering of small loans for enterprises that change the lives of people in some of the poorest countries of the world through non-profit organisation Kiva.

There are thousands more examples like this.

All these are ingenious innovations but would not be described as 'artistic' in any way. Yet they are certainly creative solutions to problems.

The fact is: Creativity is everywhere.

But we have a problem of terminology. The word Creativity has two meanings (at least). This can cause confusion and can prevent us discussing creativity in the most comprehensive and useful way possible.

In the English language, the word Creativity usually implies 'artistic creativity'. You might say that the

word Creativity has been 'hijacked' by the arts sector. Hence the word is skewed towards a definition of artistic creativity and does not comfortably suit the more general meaning of creativity (ingenuity, problem solving, innovation etc). Consequently some people will say they are "not creative" meaning that they are not talented artistically, even though they might be ingenious engineers, innovative farmers or inventive educationalists. Ironically, many people who are indeed very creative don't relate to the word 'creativity'. That's what I meant when I wrote in my book: "Creativity is not the monopoly of the artist".

So, for the sake of clarity, let's use two words.

I suggest:

"a-Creativity" for artistic creativity of all kinds; and

"i-Creativity" for the wider version of creativity: ingenuity.

People with a-Creativity have a lot to offer to others. Their artistic creativity can benefit other people and society at large in all kinds of ways. At the same time, people with a-Creativity have a lot to *learn* from others.

Indeed they (I should say 'we', because I include myself) have a lot to learn i-Creativity from people in other sectors of the economy beyond the 'creative industries' - in the fields of science, education, politics, engineering, sport, etc. We need to get out more!

In my experience of working as a management consultant advising hundreds of creative enterprises in countries all around the world, I have found that many people who define themselves as "creative" are often highly creative in the studio - but not when they are in the office. They somehow switch off their creativity when it comes to doing the business side of things. Perhaps they believe that business is boring and 'non-creative'. In doing so, they fail to recognise other forms of creativity beyond the artistic sphere.

All of us need to use i-Creativity to develop our creative businesses, cultural projects and social movements in the most imaginative and ingenious ways, especially in times of crisis, to achieve success. By using the word 'Success', I mean the unique kind of success that each of us wants, defined in our own personal terms.

We can be creative in the studio and we can be creative in the office too. In other words, we can be creative, not only in the goods and services we devise, but also in the way we manage our enterprises. Yes, we can combine artistic creativity with smart business thinking. That's what I mean when I use the metaphor 'T-Shirts and Suits'.

Here are just a few examples of how people in three different parts of the world have made their enterprises even more successful, by bringing together 'a-Creativity' with 'i-Creativity'; by combining artistic creativity with smart business thinking.

Banda Calypso found that people were pirating their CDs and selling them on street corners in Brazil, without paying any royalties to the band. The band could have tried to stop this illegal practice. Instead, they used i-Creativity and found an ingenious solution. They realised that this was a great way to publicise their music and build audiences for their concerts. So instead of fighting the pirates, they encouraged them. They used the pirates as their marketing department. They sent master copies of their CDs and even the artwork to street corner vendors, so they could sell them cheaply in all the cities, before the band arrived. The result was that Banda Calypso built a huge following and all their gigs were sold out. Now they make enough money to fly from city to city in their own private jet. They have musical creativity and also use business creativity. Sometime, giving things away free is a smart business move.

In Vietnam, two art galleries in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), were competing for customers, trying to attract tourists to buy their paintings instead of their rival's. But they used i-Creativity to realise that as well as being competitors they could also collaborate for the benefit of both their galleries. Sometimes it's a clever idea to co-operate with competitors, so they used the concept of "co-opetition" – a creative blend of co-operation and competition. They realised that they could both sell more paintings by joining forces to attract customers from around the world. Together they set up an e-commerce art gallery to sell paintings from both their galleries online. By ingeniously co-operating with a competitor, both galleries sold more paintings.

British sculptor Steve Messam has received grants from public bodies such as the Arts Council of England to create his amazing works of art. But sometimes grant funding is not available – especially

at a time of financial crisis. So he used his creativity not only in the studio but also in the office to think of ways to finance his projects. He used techniques from business using his i-Creativity, looking outside the world of the arts. He had the insight to realise that his works of art could also be tourist attractions and could be used to promote the geographic environment in which they were installed. A sculpture called 'The Drop', a gigantic 'drop' of water, was to be located in specific sites in the English Lake District, so this could be an opportunity to promote tourism in the region. He approached the marketing team of the tourist authority and made them an offer they couldn't refuse. He talked to them about his sculpture, not in terms of artistic merit but in the language of commerce, and presented them with a business case to demonstrate that it would be a good investment for them to finance the sculpture project in terms of 'Advertising Equivalent Value'. In other words, by investing in his sculpture they could achieve more publicity than they could buy in conventional advertising to reach their target market. The result was that his project was funded this way - and he didn't compromise his artistic vision at all. I congratulate him, not only on his a-Creativity but also his i-Creativity.

So let's use i-Creativity to develop our projects more successfully, by learning from other sectors about how to be ingenious in terms of raising finance, innovative in devising joint ventures, inventive in using intellectual property, being imaginative in communicating with customers, thinking laterally about using appropriate legal structures, and being smart in trading internationally.

In conclusion, by recognising and respecting both kinds of creativity, we can open our eyes to amazing new possibilities and find ingenious solutions in every field of human endeavour. We can then adopt and adapt these ideas for our own purposes, in a way that is consistent with our own values and objectives, to achieve our own unique version of Success.

So let's celebrate creativity in all its manifestations. Let's explore all kinds of creativity that exists everywhere, and learn from other people in all walks of life. Let's recognise and respect not only a-Creativity but also i-Creativity.

In this way, even in times of crisis – especially in times of crisis – we can make our creative businesses and cultural enterprises even more successful.