

Creative Leadership

A WAY OUT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS



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Does your organisation use creativity to its fullest potential? Is it a dying breed? How could creativity influence your organisation for continued and lasting success? TANIA DE JONG from the newly formed not_for_profit CREATIVITY AUSTRALIA discusses

At this unprecedented time for organisations globally, it is critical to find creative and innovative ways to bring people together to build resilience during highly uncertain times, develop stronger communication and problem solving skills, and therefore foster sustainable levels of positive motivation and wellbeing at a personal and organisational level. This will lead to greater levels of engagement and innovation in organisations and the ability to make a contribution to our society rather than just focusing on profits.

SOCIETAL HURDLES

One of the greatest challenges we all face today is overcoming the barriers to stimulating creativity and innovation in our society. We need to constantly create opportunities for individuals and communities to connect with one another in new and meaningful ways. It is only when we find a sense of meaning and purpose that we can help others

The barriers are ever present. We live in a world where computers, the internet, image and celebrities take us further away from connecting with one another in a meaningful way. We interact with boxes and screens instead of relating to one another. We are in danger of becoming a society where alienation, disengagement and self-centeredness are entrenched in a world where human beings fail to capitalize on building relationships that are generative and creative.

One way of improving our world is to help people to know how to think and therefore act differently. Perhaps in our corporate social responsibility programs we need to find new ways of giving employees a greater sense of their selves and their potential before expecting them to make a difference to others.

Creativity Australia believe that creativity offers the answers to solving many of the big issues we are facing in these unprecedented times through unlocking our full human potential. And yet it was recently said that: *“Creativity has become the most universally endangered species in the Twenty First Century. Never has the need for creativity been so compelling and never has genuine creativity been in such short supply. We risk drowning in a sea of superficiality and imitations. We have built a broadband culture but not the creative content to supply it.”* Ryan Mathews and Watts Wacker

GENERATIONS

Young children are naturally creative. So what happens between the open, effortless experimentation of our childhood and the blocks in creative thinking experienced by many adults? Kobus Neethling conducted a 15 country research project showing that creative behaviour diminishes from 98% in the three to five-year-old age group to 32% by age 10: by the time children are turning 15, only 10% are behaving creatively and it's only 2% by the age of 25. No wonder current statistics show that more than 80% of people are not engaged at work. They are not even close to utilizing their full creative capacities. We have been focusing too hard on a certain type of intelligence at the expense of the full potential of the human intellect.

Sociological, educational, psychological, physical, and behavioural factors conspire to stifle our natural ability for original thought. And overcoming those barriers is one key to recapturing our creativity. Many organisations have responded to competitive and economic pressures with the conviction that creativity and innovation are the keys to success.

There is significant international research about the enormous benefits of creative participation for wellbeing, self-esteem, connection to others, increased brain function, strengthening the immune system and much more.

Creativity Australia is hoping to unlock the creative potential lying dormant within all of us. To do so we will create customised creative programs engaging with the right side of the brain.

These programs will not only help people's sense of self esteem, connection and wellbeing but will lead to outcomes including creative leadership, greater innovation, sense of connection and increased productivity.

In a world of abundance our search is for meaning. We are starved for meaning and purpose in our lives, and with the breakdown in job security in the corporate world, we are no longer willing to separate our values from our work. There is a yearning to align life's purpose with work to make it meaningful. Work is meaningful when we add to the quality of life to those around us.

And the only reason to employ people in the future will be to benefit from the qualities that raise them above machines — qualities like inspiration, creativity,

compassion, imagination, caring, commitment, enterprise and ambition. We need to nurture and develop these qualities.

“A profound change is taking place in the organisations that are seriously concerned about the future of business and society as they are realising that ‘rational man’ is giving way to ‘artful human’.” Lotte Darsø, in her book, *‘Artful Creation’*

As a not-for-profit organisation, Creativity Australia’s Vision is ‘to unlock the innate creativity present in all human beings, so as to improve mental health and wellbeing, social cohesion, innovation and productivity’, and its Mission is ‘to develop sustainable and creative programs and advocate for creative thinking and leadership around the country in the workforce, and in partnership with the community’.

Yves Bastien, the President of Sanofi–Synthelabo in Canada found that creative programs and leadership transformed the culture of the organisation improving the communication skills, wellbeing, engagement, innovation and productivity of employees: *“For a business person, the numbers are the measure of success. If we don’t have the numbers, that’s the end of the conversation. But if we don’t have the conversations that’s the end of the numbers. It’s a paradox.”*

CREATIVITY AUSTRALIA PROGRAMS

Since its launch in November 2008, Creativity Australia has gone from strength to strength in its mission to bring creativity and creative programs to the people of Australia.

By bringing creativity into their organisations, employers can increase wellbeing, productivity,

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employee cohesion and innovative thinking, all of which are important in this troubled economic environment.

Creativity Australia is working with organisations to provide the following creative thinking and leadership programs tailored to individual workplaces and organisational cultures:

1. Keynote speeches, forums and debates on creative leadership and innovation.
2. The Brainstorm Series: ‘Creative booster’ sessions for conferences, retreats, board meetings, break-out sessions – incl. Finding Your Voice, Killer Innovation, Spirit Leadership, The Corporate Storyteller and so forth.
3. Customised programs to engender a climate of innovation amongst leaders or special operating units.
4. Development opportunities through secondment of a talented employee to work with CA
5. *With One Voice* Corporate Choirs and Battle of the Choirs (Eddie Mc Guire AM is Patron of this program.)
6. Limited places are available in mixed community/business choirs. The cost per employee helps sponsor the participation of one disadvantaged person.

SINGING IN THE STREETS

Most notably, Creativity Australia has commenced its pilot program, the *Melbourne Sings* choir, a strategic partnership with Sofitel Melbourne On Collins, Allan’s Music and various community agencies. The Melbourne Sings choir brings together employees from the Sofitel Melbourne On Collins, other Melbourne businesses and disadvantaged residents of the Fitzroy and Collingwood housing estates for weekly rehearsals towards quarterly performances at hospitals and at a range of public events. The *Melbourne Sings* choir is unique in that it brings people together from all walks of life, cutting across socioeconomic, cultural and even linguistic barriers in the pursuit of making music together. Indeed, a significant proportion of the population of the housing estates are recent migrants to Australia, and the choir provides important opportunities for socialising and even networking for employment. Other *With One Voice* Choirs in various organisations including the Royal Children’s Hospital, are also commencing.

Our society is fragmented and our ability to communicate with other people and express ourselves is limited. This undermines our fundamental human values, sense of family and community. Creativity Australia is about inspiring more productive individuals, organisations and communities. We need to tap into our creative side to find new meaning and purpose. Then anything will be possible. 

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Creativity Australia

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