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# **The Art of Creativity**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The arts have a role to play in bringing creativity to the workplace in the world of commerce and industry. The application of artistic practices and techniques drawn from the visual arts and performing arts are particularly suited to releasing the creativity found in organisations, which the rigours of the business processes practised has kept suppressed for far too long.

This paper will draw upon a number of case studies of using the arts within organisations to encourage creative problem-solving. The paper will examine the techniques and processes used by organisations to embed the arts right into the centre of business culture, making them an integral part of the business process rather than just an add-on, and the lessons that have been learned.

The case studies include: a group of 40 students on the Diploma of Management Studies course at Middlesex University; a group of 60 middle managers at Visteon (sister company of Ford Motor Company) participating on 3 day course on The Learning Organisation; a group of 80 managers on the New Century Managers Programme at Newham Council; and group of 8 participants at the Post Office Innovation Laboratory.

## CREATIVITY IN BUSINESS

As businesses enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century they are confronted more and more with the question of how to introduce more creativity and innovation in the workplace, and yet as Edwards [1] puts it:

“What on earth is creativity? How can a concept be so important in human thinking, so crucial to human history, so dearly valued by nearly everyone, yet be so elusive?”

A recent survey of 64 UK businesses [2] were asked to identify the four most important creative and innovative skills for their particular business out of a list of 21 which included: thinks laterally; seeks new experiences and new information from different fields; considers an unorthodox solution to the problem; makes unexpected associations and connections; draws on ideas outside own area of expertise; spends time considering new approaches; comes up with a lots of ideas quickly. Surprisingly, not one of the four skills identified came from those listed above. Businesses primarily focused on the problem-solving approach to creativity and listed the following as the most important creative and innovative skills: clearly defines what the problem really is 36%; gets the facts necessary to develop a solution to a problem 31%; looks for underlying causes of problems 26%; puts ideas into practice 26%. When asked to choose 3 of the most important creative and innovative activities, from a list of 9 activities their businesses were engaged in, the following emerged: developing ways of increasing sales 44%; identifying customer wants and needs to solve customer problems 43%; generating ideas for new products or services 39%. Follow-up interviews in response to a series of open ended questions, revealed that: ‘newness’; problem-solving; inventive thinking; and producing something relating to specific customer needs/wants, were the key components of creativity and innovation from their business perspective.

Partly, the reason why I believe creativity is so elusive to business, is that although, as the businesses above demonstrate, they are clear which activities, and what are the key components of creativity and innovation, they are limiting their views to problem-solving as the main creative skill needed to achieve this. Yet, they acknowledge that ‘newness’ i.e. thinking of something no-one has thought of before, is the key component of creativity. The business challenge seems to be not ‘What are the creative activities we need to be doing?’ but ‘How creative can we be to achieve them?’. The bolder the better, as this interview example shows from the above research [2]:

“A far-reaching innovation comes from a telecommunication research department, who have set up a group of employees totally focused on looking for and learning from ideas in nature from which to create specialist products for their customers. In particular, they have created a software program based on the shoaling behaviour of fish and developed a recent patent from an idea based on the hairs on the leg of a fly.”(p.27)

The core of creativity and productivity according to Barron [3] lies with the intermix of affective and cognitive abilities which include: challenging assumptions; taking risks; making connections; taking advantage of chance; recognising patterns; and seeing in new ways. The arts, in the same way as the ideas from nature applied to the telecommunication business in the example above, are ideally suited to meeting the challenge of providing links to ideas that businesses are looking for in their search for ‘newness’.

## **CREATIVE ENVIRONMENTS: INSIDE OUT OR OUTSIDE IN**

Problems exist in businesses waiting to be solved, but creativity flourishes within a psychologically safe environment according to Carl Rogers [4], which is flexible, receptive, and models openness to new experiences and a willingness to acknowledge internal wants, needs and habits, together with a willingness to play with ideas, and to experiment with new possibilities. Ekvall [5] too recognised the importance of identifying dimensions which enable creative organisational climates to flourish. These are encapsulated in the following: challenge which is both enjoyable and energetic; a freedom to be independent and take initiatives; a liveliness which leads to feeling excitedly busy; an openness to trust and accept failure; a time to generate ideas; to create mood settings in which happiness and humour can also be expressed; conflicts can be handled constructively; support can be given where people listen helpfully; debates involving contentious ideas are voiced; risk-taking on new ideas is encouraged, fast decisions can be made. Organisations are faced with several alternatives as to how to facilitate a creative organisational climate, they can try and create this climate throughout the whole organisation as in the case of those organisations (such as VAT Office, Ford Visteon) who are striving to be Learning Organisations [6]. Alternatively, they can create a dedicated space or room (as in the case of the Post Office Innovation Lab in Rugby, and the Community Alliances for Personal and Professional Development Space at Middlesex University, London), or through away-days to a creative space off-site (e.g. Synectics Offices in Hemel Hempstead, Professor John Kao's Ideas Factory in America).

Creating an Learning Organisation is to create an environment which empowers staff to operate by a set of principles embodied in the five learning disciplines: mental models; shared vision; systems thinking; personal mastery; and team learning. In the case of Visteon, the 60 participants were taught off-site at a Conference Centre in groups of 10 around tables filled with toys. The participants were then encouraged to re-create this environment back in the workplace. This was successfully achieved at the Enfield factory where the table was also filled with toys during their meetings. On the other hand, the Post Office Innovation Lab has constructed a special purpose built 'pod' in Rugby again filled with round tables this time with laptops and surrounded by toys. The curving walls of the pod is made of a material very similar to a white-board in which ideas can be written up. Computer aided creativity sets-up an environment which is more useful for collecting ideas than generating novel ideas which is best left in the hands of a facilitator who can also draw upon sounds, smells, tastes, sensation/feelings, moods and happenings to stimulate ideas. The laptops are good at allowing individuals to input their ideas anonymously, it enables the ideas to be built on, sorted and voted in all sorts of different ways and very speedily, but at the expense of interacting with the group who can provide support as well as challenging the status quo.

It should not be under-estimated as to the time, energy and cost that is required to invest in producing an environment conducive to creativity. Experiments in creating a room dedicated to learning and creativity at Middlesex University [7], ran into problems: when an attempt was made to order furnishings which were not in corporate colours; the room was only temporary available in the summer when most of the staff were away on leave, which severely reduced its use; no-one was available in the room full-time to facilitate activities, so that sessions needed to be booked; no other resources besides post-it notes, flipcharts and pens could be left in the room due to security reasons. A mobile kit of resources including toys, images, masks, bendy toys, was used to facilitate creative individual one-to-one coaching sessions in the space. This kit once unpacked can transform any room into a creative space and is also very effectively used to

transform rooms at residential schools on B822 Creative Management courses run at the Open University.

However, an environment totally dedicated to creativity which is not solely reliant on computer aided creativity will provide the best results. Synectics [8] in Hemel Hempstead have created an environment conducive to running their trademarked courses on creative problem-solving. Whilst, Professor John Kao (an ex-Harvard Professor) who was featured in an episode covering creative management consultants on Channel 4's 'Masters of the Universe' series, has created an area which looks more like an adult version of the Early Learning Centre where: actors are invited to play out organisational problems to staff; objects are placed into a large sand trays to create collective organisational visions; and chance and coincidence are encouraging by participants listening to jazz, whilst improvising on the piano.

### **‘ CHANCE & COINCIDENCE’ CREATIVITY: LEFT TO THE ARTS**

Clemen [9] divided the creative process into five steps and offers the following analysis of them: preparation which involves looking for the ‘real’ problem; incubation a period of preconscious, fringe-conscious, off-conscious, mental activity that takes us away from the problem; unconscious incubation, a series of unconscious and involuntary mental events in the period of abstention from the problem; illumination, the ‘Aha!’ or ‘Eureka’ experience leading to a change in perception or a new idea combination; verification, the checking out of the solution, in case the ‘Aha!’ turns out to be a vacuous idea. Toys, found in all the environments listed above, can help facilitate the illumination step in the creative process by introducing the role of chance and accidental connections. However, unless the connection made are recorded the value of the toys left randomly on the tables can be underestimated against the vast potential of documentation and recording that is available with computer aided creativity software. Yet, toys have the potential to give concrete form to Osborn's [10] ideas-spurring questions, when a toy can be projected with an idea it can push the imagination into new idea combinations and new analogical problem solutions.

The toys on the tables at the Post Office Innovation Lab supported the computer aided creativity on offer. It is possible to make links between the function of the toy and one of the questions from Osborn's list of ideas-spurring questions which are used during the ideas-finding step of Parnes/Osborn [11] Creative Problem-Solving model. The picture puzzles, (where 8 squares with one blank space (arranged in 3 by 3 grid) allow you to move the squares around to construct and deconstruct the picture), encouraged us to *Rearrange?* the idea. The voodoo dolls (labelled with words which pins could be stuck into), encouraged us to *Minify?* A small multi-coloured ball (constructed so that it could be pulled into a large ball 10 times its original size) encouraged us to *Magnify?* Plastic liquid-filled landscapes (that tilted from side to side when moved) encouraged us to *Combine?* with another idea, and plastic links (which could be clinked in and out to create new shapes) encouraged us to *Adapt?* Rather than just using words to generate the ideas, the toys engage our sensory side by appealing to our sensations/feelings and moods to encourage happenings to stimulate ideas.

Ford Visteon also has similar toys on their round tables to support their Learning Organisation training, which spends a session on each of the five learning disciplines. The toys serviced the same function as those above, but also included: a collection of small toys and games, and flexi-straws which allowed all of Osborn's ideas-spurring questions to be addressed at once. Also,

Koosch balls to facilitate dialogue and stress balls to ease the tension participants maybe experiencing in the training sessions.

On the module entitled 'Learning, Judgement and Creativity' as part of the New Century Managers Programme run at Newham Council. The Syntectics Creative Problem Solving technique was used as the framework, with the problem encapsulated in a postcard image to start the process off, and a creative pack to facilitate the ideas-generations stage as well as spring-boards and excursions. The creative pack was given out to each of the ten facilitators who were running groups of 8 participants arranged on a round tables. These packs included materials which could be linked to Osborn's ideas-spurring questions. The packs contained: masks asking participants to *Adapt?* the idea; Bendy toys to *Rearrange?*; postcard images to *Put to other uses?*; stickers to *Combine?* with another idea; magnetic poetry to *Substitute?* and *Reverse?*; small kaleidoscope to *Modify?*; finger-puppets to *Minify?*; and the magic wand to *Magnify?*. The creative packs also contained collection of small toys and games, flexi-straws, and stress balls plus a pack of coloured pens. The value of these toys left incidentally around have their greatest potential during the incubation phase of the creativity process, but it can be a little hit and miss as to what value they make, particularly if it is not noted or recorded. The other way to use toys are as tools to facilitate creative processes and techniques drawing on the arts for inspiration.

#### **ADD-ON CREATIVITY: SPRINKLE THE ARTS ON TOP**

Another way to engage the arts is to use artistic processes and practices to draw out learning relevant to the subject area of study. This process was successfully utilised on an Open University Staff Development course on Performance Management for 15 members of staff, and is used to illustrate the value of add-on creativity. The course opened with a reflection on some of the problems that occur at work in which the most important performance issue is identified, and why it was important to find a solution. The participants were asked to relax and imagine they were a scriptwriter of a film whose plotline was the performance issue and through a series of adventures involving an assortment of characters reach a resolution. Then participants were asked to pair up and interview each other in the style of a film interviewer e.g. Barry Norman. This exercise whilst achieving the objective also allowed participants to experience what it is like to work within a creative organisational climate which helped to create a mood setting in which happiness and humour were expressed as well as conflicts being handled constructively in a supportive way in which people listened helpfully.

Another exercise, focused on the giving of rewards for good performance that the employee wanted, rather than manager imagined they wanted. The 15 participants each choose a mask of a Victorian character e.g. sailor, judge, nanny etc they then were asked to write down 14 rewards they thought their character would like for a job well-done. The participants then put the masks on, and were given a pack of post-it notes to write a different reward for each character they encountered, and then stick the post-it note on the character's back. When the 14 post-it notes for each character were collected and compared with the original list of 14 rewards that the character awarded to themselves, the participants were surprised to find out that the match was less than 50%. They also received rewards that they did not think of, but nevertheless liked. This exercise highlighted in a sensory and engaging way, that a manager cannot assume that they always know which rewards their employees want. This exercise demonstrated the use of the other dimensions of a creative organisational climate: a time to generate ideas (rewards); to risk-take on new ideas (rewards); reach fast decisions (based on thinking up the rewards due to the

limited time for the exercise to be completed i.e. 20 minutes); debates involving contentious ideas (rewards) were voiced.

The last exercise involved the remaining dimensions of a creative organisational climate: a challenge which is both enjoyable and energetic; a freedom to be independent and take initiatives; a liveliness which leads to feeling excitedly busy; and an openness to trust and accept failure. The challenge was for one member of the group (i.e. the performer) to perform three pre-determined (by the group but unknown to them) tasks where the only feedback given to them would be a round of applause if they closer to performing the components of the task, and silence otherwise. The tasks were very simple and consisted of transferring an object from one location in the room to another. The audience became caught up in the performer's struggle to achieve the task, if the performer was half right then the audience were sometimes divided as to clap or not. The performer learned a great deal of what it was like to only receive feedback when things were going well, and how unhelpful silence can be in terms of feedback..

The following three exercises (described in some detail) each 20 minutes long, and taking up an hour in total over a 2 day course, show it is practically possible to engage the arts in drawing out learning relevant to the subject area of study whilst experiencing all the dimensions of a creative organisational climate even for only an hour in total.

### **ACTIVITY-LED CREATIVITY: USING THE ARTS**

The three most important activities of creativity and innovation which lend themselves to using the arts as a mechanism to generating ideas and identifying actions, as indicated before are: developing ways of increasing sales; identifying customer wants and needs to solve customer problems; and generating ideas for new products or services. Melvyn Burton, a Open University student studying on the B822 Creative Management module took advantage of using the B822 Techniques Library [12] plus a combination of exercises that he designed using the arts as inspiration to find an identity, a name and a marketing strategy for a new formed branch of an I.T. company he had just joined. The techniques used were as follows: as preparation the improved nominal group technique (Technique 66 from the Technique library); then starting the workshop with Alter Ego Intro specially designed by Burton looking at the alternative images the organisation presents of itself; followed by free association (Technique 53); greeting cards (Technique 58); and sticking dots (Technique 120) all based on VanGundy book [13]. A period of incubation occurred between this workshop and the next one. The next workshop: as preparation paraphrasing by key words (Technique 98); then starting the workshop with beach ball Intro designed by the author; followed by Bunches of Bananas (Technique 17); panel consensus (Technique 88); less competitive method of voting (Technique 72); and ending with traffic lights designed by Burton as a way to grade the feasibility of an idea. Although, the workshops incorporated the use of metaphor in the form of symbolic analogy, a greater proportion of the workshops relied on 'left-brain' style creative problem-solving techniques.

Businesses are aware that activities of creativity and innovation can also include those of an internal nature: developing new ways of doing things within the organisation; devising new procedures, practices and systems; and proposing new trends and directions for business development. A better balance can be reached with 'left-brain' and 'right-brain' approaches as the following example illustrates. The BP/Bovis Alliance set very clear objectives as to what they wanted to achieve internally, these included: to trail an alternative method of meeting and 'workshopping'; and for all members to understand each other's responsibilities within their own

networks and the Alliance Network. For all members to get acquainted with each other in a professional & social sense, and to gain an understanding of the rich potential of the Alliance Network in a physical and sensory way, an 'right-brain' exercise was constructed where each participant of the workshop was asked to build their own network using flexi-straws. All the individual networks were then connected to build a large Alliance of networks. Each straw colour represented a line of communication matched one of DeBono's six thinking hats [14]. This not only allowed participants to build complicated 3D structures but to also examine the lines of communication within each network, those linking the networks, and how these lines of communications travelled across the entire network. It was easier to identify the overemphasis for one style of communication in parts of the network, as well as seeing the points of blockage in communication over the network as a whole. In the follow-on 'left-brain' exercise, the networks were then given the opportunity to voice their opinions in response to the question 'Do you believe that your networks are structured in the most effective way to meet BP/Bovis Alliance business objectives?'. Using dialogue, the responses were recorded on colour-coded hexagons (using the same colours for lines of communication as the flexi-straws) which could be clustered to identify groups of concerns, opportunities, and actions. The two exercises, one following on from the other, show the power of following 'right-brain' approaches which rely on symbols, visual imagery, metaphor, association, emotional connections and intuitions, with 'left-brain' approaches which depend on verbal expression, rational and sequential thought, in challenging assumptions; making connections; recognising patterns; and seeing in new ways.

It is possible to combine 'right-brain' and 'left-brain' techniques seamlessly, when employing processes and techniques found in the dramatic arts, in addressing the most important activities of creativity and innovation in the workplace. For example, the Forum Theatre technique [15] developed by the Brazilian Theatre Practitioner:

"... is based on the theatrical staging of the protagonist's problem by actors, the audience are then invited onto the stage to intervene in the dramatic action to propose solutions of their own on how to solve the problem. Boal's intention is to transform the audience into being the protagonist of the theatrical action and, by this transformation, provide a forum which tries to change the protagonist's situation. The audience is transformed into a protagonist-in-action, i.e. spect-actor, a derivative of the word spectator." (p.4)

has been successful incorporated into the Organisational Theatre of Learning whose objectives are to: provide a opportunity to dress rehearse the actual problem and action; script the problem to synthesise possible solutions; enact the script creatively using props, costume, and movement; experiment with a number of conflict resolution techniques live; improve the quality of relationships, communication and problem-solving skills; and stimulate reflection, argument, counter-argument, and action This model of practice is experienced every year by Diploma of Management Students on a module entitled 'Developing Individuals and Teams'. The students encapsulate in a written script the characters, personalities and issues involved in the problems their organisations are facing. These are then 'acted' out by small groups of students to the other students who attempt to make interventions to alter the course of the dramatic action by proposing solutions using the Forum Theatre technique. Predictions are made in the written script as to when and what these interventions could be. These are then matched to the interventions that were actually made, and through reflection managers have the opportunity to learn about their managerial style in action, as well as those of others, when dealing with real organisational issues. When respondents in a previous study [16] involving the use of the Forum

Theatre technique were asked to identify whether their organisation would be open to using tool in their training: “The following is a list of areas they identified as potential places for using this model:

- Sales - ‘motivating their sales force...’
- Customer Services - ‘...would relish it’
- Marketing - ‘...(but only if they could dress up too!)’
- Social Services - ‘we work in a role bound way often this is prescribed in legislation - might be helpful to experiment playfully how changes of style effect these roles.’
- Senior Management Training - ‘very senior mangers in health care’
- Staff Development - ‘watching videos and finding the ‘right & wrong way’ way to address the situation.’
- Continuous Improvement - ‘Yes, I think they would be open to new techniques, it would interest the workforce encouraging them to participate in a non-threatening environment.’”

As we can see from the above responses the Forum Theatre Technique is ideally suited to addressing the three most important activities of creativity and innovation i.e. Sales, Customer Services, New product development whilst drawing upon dramatic processes and practices which combine ‘right-brain’ and ‘left-brain’ approaches.

### **CRE-ACTIVITY: FACILITATING WITH THE ARTS**

Facilitating with the arts is ideally suited to enabling ‘right-brain’ approaches which rely on symbols, visual imagery, metaphor, association, emotional connections and intuitions. A simple use of an image from the visual art form can facilitate a number of outcomes. As the following exercise will illustrate. Each group member is asked to choose an image and pass it onto the group member on the right whilst receiving an image from the group member on the left, they then place an image on top and carry on passing the packs of images around the group, until it reaches them again, and then they place the last image on top. If the first image selected was linked to problem expressed as a ‘How to ...?’ statement, then the subsequent images would represent the re-framing of the problem into other ‘How to ..?’ statements. The use of the image does not need to be restricted to the problem definition and problem re-framing stages of the creative problem solving cycle, but can in fact be used in any of the other stages e.g. ideas-generation.

The image could also be used to facilitate the work of Gareth Morgan in his book *Imagination* [17], in this case the image chosen by the group member would represent the image they hold of themselves as a manager, images contributed by the other group members would represent the images that the group hold of that particular group member as a manager. Associations can be made between the image, and the personality, characteristics and abilities of the manager. For example, suppose the group member choose an image of a tornado and associated it with spotting problems and moving in as quickly as possible to solve them, whilst a group member choose an image of a whirlpool which is powerful in the middle and consistent, but if you get to close you could get sucked in. These metaphors can encourage a more open dialogue which is honest and clear as to the strengths and weaknesses of each manger and the team as a whole.

The image can also be used to facilitate storytelling. The single image can be the starting point of a process which generates a collective group of images which individuals can turn into a story, poem, piece of prose, mantra, saying, or a fable. Each of these individual stories can be used as the basis of a collective story describing the events and characters at work. The power of stories is their potential to speak for the didactic elements and also provide the opportunity for deeper meaning, that of the heart and the spirit. The power of storytelling has been very successful incorporated into Learning Histories [18], described as:

“... a written narrative of a company’s recent set of critical episodes: a corporate change event, a new initiative, a widespread innovation, a successful product launch or even traumatic event such as a major reduction in the workforce. The document ranges in length from 20 to 100 pages, nearly all of it presented in two columns. In the right-hand column, relevant events are described by the people who took part in them, or observed them close-up. ... The left-hand column is a different matter. It contains analysis and commentary by the learning historians.” (p.176)

The Learning histories prompted by images, in the same way as metaphors, can raise the ‘undiscussable’ issues which lie just below the surface in an organisation.

As we can see with just taking an example of facilitating with images from the visual arts an array of outcomes is possible, from creative problem-solving to storytelling. They fit in neatly with the thinking of Eisner [19] who has always believed in ‘new’ forms of representation as encouraging new ways of seeing. He lists five ways in which alternative forms of representation hold out a promise to get in touch with the bedrock upon which meaning is constructed: “

1. They encourage ‘empathy’ with the internal thoughts and feelings being expressed.
2. They vividly express the ‘particularity’ of the moment, experience.
3. They evoke what he calls ‘productive ambiguity’ in stimulating multiple perspectives around a single experience.
4. This leads to an increase in the questions we can use to inquire further into the nature of the experience.
5. They reveal ‘individual aptitudes’ that might otherwise have been hidden.” (p.8)

When using images as the ‘new’ form of representation to facilitate the process of seeing in new ways in groups, this list can be transformed into steps. Steps 1 and 2 involve each group member choosing the image, Step 3 involves the image being passed around the group and added-on, Steps 4 and 5 upon the images returning to the group member to study and analyses their content. Facilitating with the arts to open up the imagination as far as businesses are concerned must lead to some action. Eisner [19] believes this is possible:

‘Our conceptual life, shaped by the imagination and the qualities of the world experienced, gives rise to the intentions that direct our activities. Intentions are rooted in the imagination. Intentions depend upon our ability to recognise what is and yet to imagine what might be.’ (p.7)

## **CRE-ARTIVITY: EMBEDDING THE ARTS**

It is possible to embed the arts in a programme of study such as the Open University B822 Creative Management 3 day residential school such that only right-brain techniques are employed. The author who is trained in the theatre arts, performing arts, and art and design, has

put a residential course together which draws on the very best that right-brain approaches has to offer, from the visual and performing arts, such as: imagework; guided imagery; relaxation; film-sequencing; story-boarding; drawing; body-sculpting; body-surfing; devising and improvising; creative writing; storytelling; theatre games; physical warm-ups; and environmental happenings. The students are absorbed into an open space with no chairs and tables, but with access to toys, masks, postcard images, objects, musical instruments, and materials, which facilitate the participants to engage with symbols, visual imagery, metaphor, association, emotional connections and intuitions to creatively problem-solve. The participants are asked to sign-up on a creative journey of discovery where the path is yet unknown, and all that is required is to trust the process. On this creative journey it is possible to start from the desired outcome and work backwards to connect this image to the present reality. Fritz [20] describes this three-stage creative process as: conceiving what you want by knowing what you want; knowing what currently exists by developing an accurate perception; taking action by inventing, learning and adjusting.

The participants experience a set of exercises which requires them to internalise the experiences, rather than constantly record them on flipcharts or in notebooks. Explanations of how each exercise works is given. Although each exercise has clearly defined aims and objectives these are not stated before the exercises start. Theorising is discouraged, otherwise the experience is likened to a journey in a car which starts with your foot on the accelerator, then slamming your foot onto the brake to consult your *AtoZ* streetmaps, then putting your foot back onto the accelerator, to repeat the experience all over again. The point is not to concentrate on planning where you are next going, but to let the experiences guide you forwards. At the end of each exercise, there is time for reflection, and this is facilitated with the use of the Koosch Ball which gives each participant the right to speak and the right to be heard.

Its very important to create a psychologically safe environment as stated by Carl Rogers earlier. Various exercises disguised as theatre games, are proposed: exchanging the participants' names; things they would like to know about each other; encouraging participants to step in the middle in response to one of the participant's request of 'I want to be in a group of people who ...' (e.g. scuba-diving); together with listening in pairs for 5 minutes uninterrupted, then choosing a 6 words the listener has heard, 6 words the speaker has spoken, and 5 random words to create a story which is shared with the group using a puppet as the vehicle of expression. All of these start-up exercises create a free, supportive self-regulating environment which values all ideas. There are no 'put-downs', no rejections, no competitiveness, no personal judgements. Once these attitudes are inherent in the way the group begins to work, it is easy to maintain this way of working throughout the journey. If the group runs into any problems, then the exercise can be conducted in silence or the participants can be reminded to take off their De Bono's black critical hat and to stick their green creativity hat back on.

Many of the exercises stated throughout this paper are used to encourage the participants to stay as divergent as possible before converging onto the solution to the problem. Just at the point of convergence, the participants are asked to choose an image of what the problem looks like and an image of what the solution looks like. Then they are asked to fix the start and the finish in a tableaux, and create the journey in-between using their group and whatever props they need. This is then performed to the other group who note their reactions in sounds, tastes, colours, actions, random words, ideas and feelings. Many wonderful scenarios have been acted out, just to give an example: one group working on one group member's problem of disharmony in her

team started their journey in a lift whose doors closed on a very unhappy group, as the lift descended the audience could hear the group slowly beginning to harmonise the sounds of their musical instruments, so as when they emerged back on the floor from which they started from, the lift doors opened onto a harmonious group. Ideas amongst others, stemming from this performance included a team away day where constant feedback and contact was made with staff back in the organisation. Many of the groups experienced their performances as cathartic experiences which helped to externalise their mental model of the problem and solution. The participants were then encouraged to return to their start and finish image, and the gap in-between was filled with objects, images, books and words facilitated a gift-giving exercise. In this exercise, the participants were not allowed to give to their own problems but only to each others, after which the participants using their gifts created their own journey plans, rather than action plans. These were facilitated by themselves in pairs and by the facilitator in one-to-one sessions lastly at least 20 minutes to extrapolate any other meanings that had been missed so far in order to map their journey plan to their own present reality.

### **THE ART OF CREATIVITY PROVIDERS**

To embed the arts in the culture of the organisation or business you are working for takes great skill, both in facilitation and in the arts themselves. Sometimes this expertise is not available in the organisation and outside facilitation is required. This needs to be more than a one-off workshop, and one scheme proposing to do just that is, ArtsandBusiness [21] who through their latest initiative the Creative Forum: “aim to embed the arts right into the centre of business culture, making them an integral part of business process rather than a bolt on accessory.” (p.7)

Several large organisations like Sainsbury, Marks & Spencer, Mischo de Reya, and Allied Domecq have already embraced the idea. Sainsbury used an arts activity run by Oxford Stage Company on body language, which through a series of exercises staff learned how they could change their status with one single action which did not involve a single word. This was then applied back on the shop floor dealing with customers on the front-line. Marks & Spencer invited artists to be involved in giving presentations on the theme of colour a subject which dominates the working environment, and now holds two events each month. This success was followed up by appointing a poet-in-residence to work with staff to express themselves more effectively both verbally and poetically. Mischo de Reya also invited a poet to hold poetry workshops with their lawyers to help them take a fresh approach to their writing. Whilst at Allied Domecq, the Royal Shakespeare Company is helping the company in a wide range of creating thinking exercises and training scenarios.

Other creative arts providers include an assortment of theatre companies (e.g. Nottingham Playhouse), dance companies (e.g. Phoenix dance Company), drama schools (such as LAMBDA), plus an array of freelance trainers and consultants who specialise in a wide range of creative methods and techniques. The author is one such individual who specialises in: ensemble team-building; the Forum Theatre technique to manage conflict-resolution; imagework; and one-to-one creative life coaching using an assortment of creative props and materials. The Trestle Theatre Company offer a similar service: a team-building day which addresses issues like trust, respect and active listening; the creative ensemble which is aimed at existing teams who wish to explore change or team roles; and body talk that approaches presentation skills, conflict resolution and body language. Most of the exercises employed are familiar to anyone who has worked in drama, and this has led to formation of AKT Productions Ltd who provide training through performance where the process usually starts with a play which challenges complacency

and always provokes a response. Also Lively Arts who specialise in developing management through participation in the arts, started life as Opera Circus and turned into Lively Arts after a successful 'conference' in which they got the delegates to create an entire opera from scratch. The effect was inspiring, exhilarating, inspiring and fun, and facilitated the team in creating something truly spectacular. This is the power of the arts.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is important not to limit creativity just to creative problem-solving, as Holden in an article for artsbusiness [21] observed as a freelance trainer:

“To many people in the commercial world, the word ‘creativity’ is a synonym for ‘problem-solving’. In business jargon, managers try to ‘get out of the box’ in order to ‘think laterally’ and ‘provide creative solutions to problems’. Increasingly however, businesses are realising that creativity is not just the activity of brainstorming in hotel room (after which everyone can conveniently get back in the ‘office’ box) but something new - the promotion of change and experimentation which is vital to growth, healthy development, and survival. In addition, they are being forced, by the pace of social and technological change to unleash all the creative resources of their employees to stay abreast of the game.” (p.10)

In answer to the question ‘What can business gain from the arts?’, let us not forget what Albert Einstein said with regards to advances in science [17]:

‘Imagination is more important knowledge. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.’ (foreword)

and the arts are ideal suited to facilitating the creative use of the imagination.

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