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# CREATIVITY SPHERE

*Creativity is the ultimate skill of mankind  
(However there is nothing called ultimate in creativity)*

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May 2007 / 47

*Back to the basics*

## What is creativity?

*(‘Innovation’ is now the talk of the town. No meeting ever ends – be it the CEO addressing the departmental heads, manager guiding the team members, Club get together, annual general meeting, monthly sales review meeting, even the swamiji’s spiritual discourse - without pronouncing the word ‘innovation.’ No vision – mission statement is complete without this word finding a place. (Thank god, that keeps me engaged thro’ out!) This article is an attempt to go to the basics – to make an insight in to this ever exciting world of Creativity and innovation.)*

In the year 1957 a group of 24 scientists assembled in Washington. They were asked to predict what they thought the world would be like in 20 years time. These scientists represented different industries and different disciplines and came from different parts of the world. They were, for all practical purposes, men who were actually shaping the world of tomorrow – then.

They deliberated for three days and came with a long list of things to come – after 20

years, what men will eat, what they will wear, how they will communicate, how will they go from one place to another, how they will spend the time and so on. These were the predictions they made for a future that was 20 years away. But what happened?

In one year, two years, three years several of the things from the list started becoming realities. People were wondering as to how it is possible?

What the noted science fiction writer, Jules Verne once said, perhaps, explains this phenomenon; *whatever a man is capable of conceiving as an idea the other man will be able to achieve it. And creativity is the ability to conceive new ideas.*

Everything in the world is created twice – first as an idea and then as reality, be it the radio receiver, the classic Othello, the film or the vessel Titanic, even the world war.

Creativity is not new, in fact, it is as old as the mankind is on this earth. The earliest man when started living inside the caves for his physical comfort or to escape from the attack of dinosaurs – it was a creative act.



Strength is the capacity to break a chocolate bar in to four pieces with your bare hands and eat just one of the pieces - **Judith Viorst**

Then he started using sharp stone as weapon for hunting. He found that for moving an object it is easier to roll it, than physically lifting and carrying it. In this process the wheels came. Then he made fire. These are all the creative acts of mankind. But creativity, *as a science*, is new. So there are several definitions and several view points on “what is creativity?”

As we saw at the beginning, **creativity is the ability to conceive new ideas**. In fact, this is one of the most popular views and more and more work is carried out on this premise. And ‘**innovation**’ is converting the idea in to reality, which is simply a matter of time, money and energy – the more one puts in, quicker is the result.

**Creativity is a tool of survival**. Several businesses have closed down as they were not willing to change, and continued with their traditional products and outlooks only to see that there no customers to buy their wares and services. Swiss watch industry is a typical example. When the electronic (quartz) watches started coming from Japan and Hongkong during the seventies, the Swiss were not ready to acknowledge and continued to make the good old mechanical watches. By the time they realised that there are no customers for mechanical watches, several watch makers had to pull down their shutters.

**Creativity is looking where all have looked and seeing what no one has seen**. For hundreds of years apples were falling from trees and people accepted it as a normal phenomenon. (*Apples have to fall, after all, they are not birds to fly.*) One person found that it is not falling on its own, but Earth is pulling it towards its centre. We accept things as they are, and are never bothered to find out why is it so? When the laptop computers were becoming smaller and smaller, the back-up battery was an issue. What was available in the market was ‘larger the size, longer the power supply and vice versa.’ But the laptop

object

manufacturers needed ‘small size – longer duration’ batteries. While all the battery manufacturers were spending millions in developing such batteries, 3M started looking inside the machine and found that the display screens were consuming most of the power from the battery. They started working on the screen and came up with “TFT” technology screens which consume little power. All the laptop manufacturers adopted this technology, and even any LCD display today is that of TFT.

**Creativity is a conscious escape from the routine**. A routine matter is one which we mechanically do without active involvement or seeing the relevance of the act. For very act there is a reason and context behind it. As days go on, we are keen only to do the act and stop seeing the relevance or need. In this process sometimes, we waste our time, money and energy in doing things which are not required at all. Deliberately and intentionally changing our routines help us look at things from new view points for innovative solutions.

**Creativity is relating of unrelated things**. Transistor radios were made as a separate item and cassette recorders were made as a different item. Akio Morita found lots of components are same in both of them and he physically joined them and started selling it in the name of two-in-one. The rest is history in Sony Corporation. Paper and soap are combined to make paper soap for travelers. Spoon and fork together form spork. Table and chair are combined as chair with a small writing arrangement. The cell phone today comes with as many combinations as our imagination can go – Camera, FM Radio, MP3 Player, Internet, TV receiver, Videogame, MMS, GPS and what not?

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I'm looking for a lot of men with an infinite capacity for not knowing what cannot be done – **Henry Ford**

**Creativity is shaking hands with tomorrow.** We normally dislike changes. This is due to neophobia, fear of the unknown. Creativity is welcoming the changes, experimenting with new things. Even changing the newspaper you read or the tooth paste you use, will help you get ready for changes. Creativity is walking on a new plane and hence developing the courage to explore unknown territories.

**Creativity is doing what others have not done.** In IBM Corporation, they were promoting the phrase "Think" by displaying it in all the places inside their premises. Every executive will be having it in front of their

desks. 'If one **thinks** he will be able to see new ways, new connections and new solutions,' was the philosophy behind this initiative. Akio Morita liked this concept, but wanted to have his own phrase. He started displaying, "Do what others have not done." The message is very clear, 'in every situation think of the things that others have not thought of.' Following the traditions and doing what others are doing, is what everyone is comfortable with. Creativity is coming out of the comfort zone and enter the concern zone with comfort.

*(To be continued in the next issue)*

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## **PUZZLE: Pigeons and the hunter (CS 46)**

Five pigeons were on a roof and one of them was shot dead by a hunter. How many are left?

**Hint:** The answer is any number from zero to infinity. Let your wild imagination sour and justify each of your answers.

**CONGRATS!** Nityakishor Dixit of Renukoot, Dinesh Nadar of Silvassa, Kishore Kumar of Varanasi, D P Gupta of Gwalior, K Sivanesan of Tiruchi, Robert De Mello of Vasco, S K Borbora of Gauhati, Ibha of XIMB, Bhubaneswar, A Sivakumar of Karaikal, S K Mazumdar of Bhopal et. al. have given answers, but most of you have taken one answer and justified it as how is it possible.

**DISCUSSIONS:** *The common answer is four. Our logical brain considers this as a problem of subtraction and gives the answer immediately. But when we go and look outside, we see none is left. People started wondering as what is going on? – we are very good in arithmetic, our systems are in order and according to the stock register, there ought to be four, but we see nothing. Has our logic ditched us? Then we realised that because of the noise of the gun shot the other four have flown away, so none is left. We started calling this as common sense. Yes, anything that our logic cannot answer is common sense.*

*Most of us are happy to stop with this answer.*

*However, if pressed for more answers, we can extend our imagination. It can be anything from zero to infinity. The dead (or injured) one is still lying there, so one is the answer. Two birds have carried the dead one to the crematorium (or the injured one to the hospital). So, two birds are left. The victim is a small one, so one bird is sufficient to carry it, then three are left. The gun was fitted with a silencer, so there was no noise and hence four were left. The silencer fitted gun missed the target, so all the five are alive.*

*We are very likely to stop here believing that we have thought of every possible answer. If insisted for still more, we are bewildered – how can there be more as we started only with five.*

*After few seconds we recognise that for mourning, friends and relatives of the victim have started coming and the number started increasing to six, seven and so on.*

*Yes, our imagination is a wonderful thing and can take us any where and get us anything.*

## PUZZLE for this issue - WRONG NUMBER

The marketing department of a major bank prepared a direct mail campaign to launch a new product. They printed over two million brochures but were horrified to find a mistake in the brochure – it had a wrong digit in the telephone number. Callers would get a dead line instead of the call centre.

**What should they do first – fire the marketing manager or reprint the brochures?**

## LETTERS

**Kanchana**, Bangalore: I have gone through the earlier issues of CS by downloading from your website. All of them are thought provoking. They changed my way of thinking while dealing with my problems.

**Anil Tambe**, Pune: I was so thrilled to receive your mail and felt that it must be a God's plan. I thank the unknown person who informed you my email address. I have downloaded all the previously available issues from CS-35 to CS-48. I just scrolled through these issues and am sure it would be a treat to read and act upon and profit in multiple ways.

I had been working in the creative environment all along, but was on a straight path. From now on I will enjoy moving in the creativity sphere.

**B Rajasekaran**, Bangalore: CS 46 was of throwing enlightening sparks upon usual activities with unusual insight and extraordinary observation. It was, in fact, a challenge to enforce the dipping of interrogative outlook itself into the article, but resultantly one is convinced of the realities in the market like the proven truth of Dell.

The user-friendly web-design, easy access, pithy contents, informative nuggets and burgeoning creativity irresistibly entice the readers. Thank you for your continuous efforts to enlarge the circumference of the creativity of the willing individuals!

**S K Dubey**, Nagpur: New year resolution (CS 46, how can you call it new year resolution, when you are starting it from April?) was really different from the conventional resolutions.

*Even the government has accepted (for accounting purposes) that starting from any day and ending with the same day next year is one year. Of course, the best time to start new year resolutions is 1<sup>st</sup> January. The second best time is today.*

## How's't?

- When people change their telephone numbers, they change both the landline and the mobile numbers at the same time
- The house gets cleaned up just before someone visits
- In any business competition the battle comes to an end, but the war never

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Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle –  
**Abraham Lincoln**

## LETTERS.....

**Arindam Chatterjee**, Durgapur: How do you keep your energy and enthusiasm always high?

*Thank you for the complements. Every one of us has high levels of such energy and enthusiasm by nature. Unfortunately some of us waste the natural power in wrong or non-productive ways. When I try to hide something inherent in me, I am wasting my energy. I am putting all my efforts in this useless thing and draining out my natural resource. When I tell lies, I am very keen to remember that lie, and spend all my energies in remembering that lie. When I am worrying about an issue, more energy is wasted. When I carry grudges or jealousy, I am carrying heavy loads on my shoulder (or on my heart) and spend more energy. Thro' these holes the energy is dripping out.*

*Alternately, when I want to do something good, even when I think of something good, my energy level increases.*

*Thank you Arindam, for helping me to take stock of myself. I was envying at some others who were more enthusiastic than me. I was jealous of somebody who was doing better than me. I was carrying grudges against people who have harmed me. Now I understand why I am not at my best?*

**Harinath Raghavendran**, Chennai: What prompted me to write this material is an article about Writing in CS 46. To admit a fact, I am neither an insatiable writer nor a voracious reader. As such I have not

indulged in any great writings in the past. All my writings were confined to appease examiners in schooling days.

I would like to touch upon one aspect which affects almost all c-enabled (c stands for computer) people is the management of emails. There are loads and loads of mails which requires follow-ups, feedbacks, actions, forwards, backwards etc. I would like to get an idea about how people manage their inbox and what are all the best ways to have an effective management of emails. I feel a lot of time can be used creatively and effectively if proper planning is done beforehand

Just to ponder I am raising few questions

- ◎ How many messages are there in the inbox and what is the aging
- ◎ On an average how many mails are received and how many were sent
- ◎ Why is that mails received is always (far) higher than mails sent
- ◎ Honestly how many mails are addressed to us for action
- ◎ Are we using proper grammar while drafting mails and reduced use of double negatives

Note: I attended a training program in May 2006 which happened in Chennai for which you were the trainer. I have done a bit of creativity in sending this mail as PDF instead of conventional word or outlook message. Needless to say, I owe this entirely to you.

# Ideas for innovation

How many new models with new features of Cell-phones are coming? It seems there is no end to the design of TVs, computers, cars, pens, cloths etc. Where do they get ideas for new models / designs?

When everyone was happy waiting for four days before the film roll was processed, printed, dried and the photographs seen, **Polaroid could not wait that long and wanted to see it immediately** and came with the idea of instant cameras. For hundreds of people carrying a pot of ink and a quilt posed no problem, except for **Waterman. He recognized the inconvenience** and came with the idea of fountain pens.

The progress the mankind has made is because of someone or other had felt some **inconveniences in the existing / conventional things**. Mechanical watches required daily winding. Some one was not happy with this (while most others were satisfied), so came automatic watches. These required to be worn always to keep them functional. So came battery-driven electronic watches. Even the batteries required to be changed periodically. Then came eco-friendly, 'never-required to change the battery' watches.

There is scope for improvement in anything and everything – whether it is a man-made article, human relation technique, business operation or process technology. Everything can be made at a lower cost, in a quicker way for more customer value. **Recognising the inconveniences in the current situation is the source for new ideas.**

People begin to become successful the minute they decide to be – *Harvey Mackay*



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