

Developing and sustaining a culture of creativity at work.

Scene Setting.

IBM interviewed 1,500 CEOs in the public and private sectors across 60 nations. 60% of the respondents believed creativity is the most important quality to have in business, followed by integrity, and global thinking.

PWC interviewed 1,379 CEOs, almost a quarter see innovation as their top priority in the coming year. The challenge they face is how to cultivate innovation.

BCO Survey. Over 90% of survey respondents display art on their premises and over 86% of people think art in the office is more relevant in today's office environment. Why? *'As everything is so IT-orientated, [it is] nice to gaze occasionally at something of beauty. [It implies that] the office is more of a meeting place than just a production facility. In environments which are increasingly trying to depersonalise space, art adds that 'human' element which most people can and want to relate to.'*

Over 90% of survey respondents said that art makes the workplace feel more welcoming. *We all need more cheering-up! [It] demonstrates that the work/life style balance is important and not everything in the working day is related to projects/work or business life.*

60% said that art stimulates creativity among staff, yet worryingly, in over 80% of

cases, the art choices are being made by so called 'senior executives'.
83% said art was displayed in public areas of their company versus 58% in staff areas.

Societal wellbeing

Participatory arts. After engaging with the arts, 79% of people in deprived communities in London ate more healthily, 77% engaged in more physical activity and 82% enjoyed greater wellbeing. £1 spent on early care and education has been calculated to save up to £13 in future costs. Participatory arts activities w children improve cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development.

Arts on prescription. AoP has shown a 37% drop in GP consultation rates and a 27% reduction in hospital admissions, a social ROI of between £4 and £11 for every £1 invested in AoP.

Imagine the arts as part of company and societal wellbeing.



So – creativity matters, but why don't we...

'We're too busy'

'It's too risky'

'We're not encouraged to be creative'

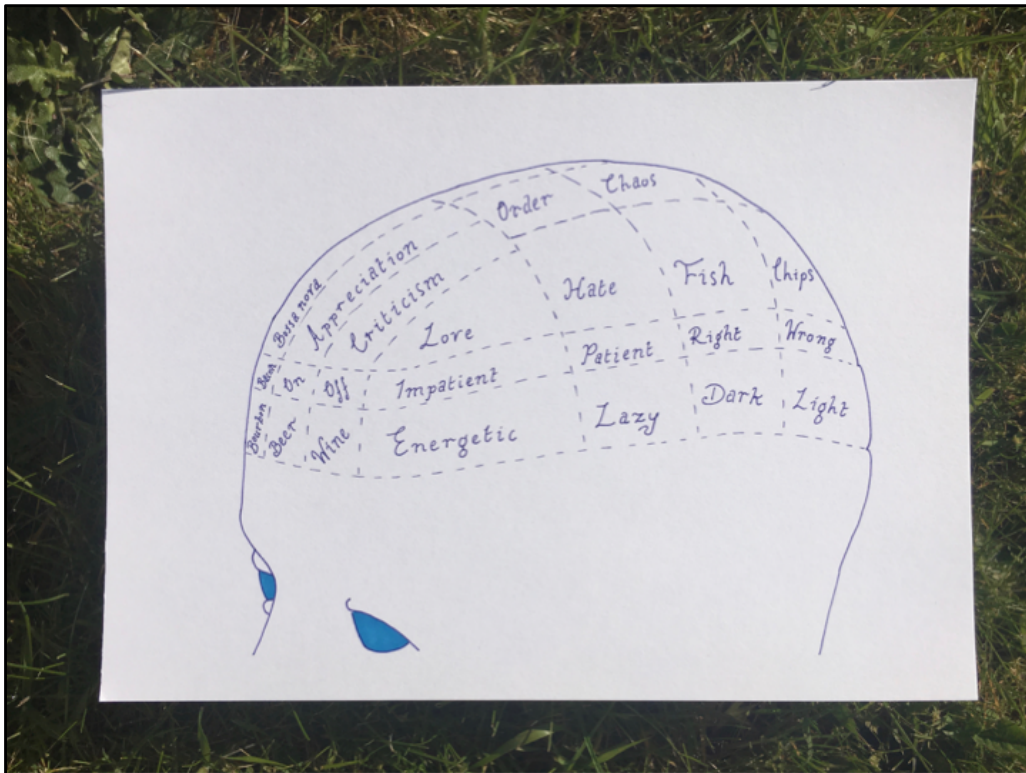
'The culture is coercive/conformist'

'There's a gap in what we say and what we do'

'It's perceived to be inefficient'

'Vulnerability is the path to belonging, to innovation, trust and creativity.'

Over 11,000 of 13,000 interviewees for Brene Brown's research can recall a time in school that was so shaming it forever changed how they thought of themselves as learners – 50% of those recollections related to art and creativity.



A few ways to begin to bring art and work together.

Artists Talks. These can stimulate interest and debate; and often prove very popular. Collaborations. Involving staff in the creative process itself can foster a sense of ownership in the ultimate artwork. Credit reference agency, Experian, for example, commissioned a photographer to create two digital montages made up of hundreds of photographs by members of staff so that everyone could claim a small piece of it.

Interactive Art. Kinetic pieces can do much to involve staff in workplace art – literally. Photo Field by Jason Bruges studio for UBS London, for example, allowed employees to curate their own personal art collection on a series of screens in the atrium.

Employee Art. Fostering artistic talent within a company is very beneficial as any arts-based initiative can ‘marshal positive feelings...and the ability to motivate oneself’. Displaying selected employee art in the office can also engage the workforce. Photographic Competitions. A brilliant way to engage employees and increase art awareness.

“Our people really enjoyed the ability to bring their innovation and creativity to the task at hand - and it was a great opportunity to continue introducing young females to our world as part of Bring Your Daughter to Work Day. Really pleased this initiative

was enjoyed so much by you, and by us.” Malcolm at AECOM

“We’re progressing our workspace activity – trying hard to maintain and encourage some of the great perspectives and creative thinking that colleagues experienced at the event. I’m still quite blown away by the painting activity everyone took part in, and how much they threw themselves into it and enjoyed it. It was one of my stand out experiences (personal, and as a group) for last year.” Darren at NATS



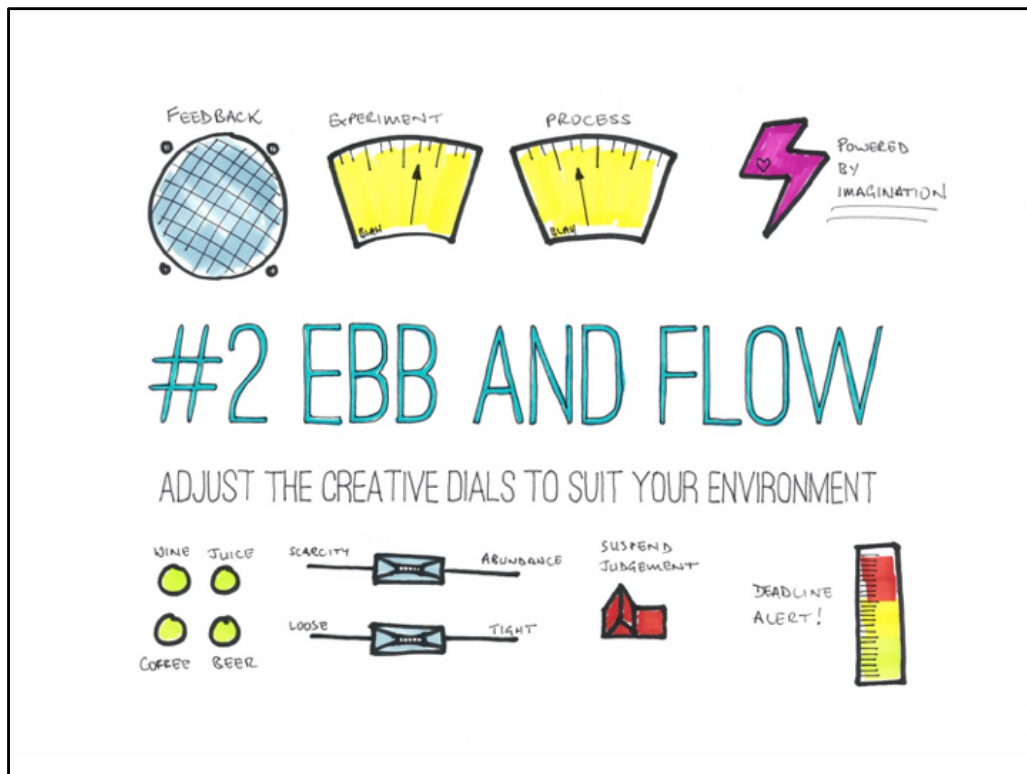
Doing it for ourselves – four simple ideas to help start the creative process.

We get hung up on believing our work is not good enough.

Most of the time, we are not here to create Masterpieces, we are here to stretch our creative muscles.

Relax, and sketch yourself into existence.

Draw for the bin - not The Royal Academy.



Creativity isn't something you just switch on. It ebbs and flows according to the environment and attitude around you. What are the levers and dials you need to be aware of and able to adjust?

Creativity borne of constraint - Necessity is the mother of invention.

'Creativity is subtraction - Choose what to leave out'. Steal Like An Artist - Austin Kleon

'Drawing is about mark making - Try to use only the marks you need'. 101 Things to Learn in Art School - Kit White



Start something - experiment – share it - learn as you go.

Here's an artistic example, you'll have many more.

<http://consultingartist.com/water-colour/paints-on-a-plane/>

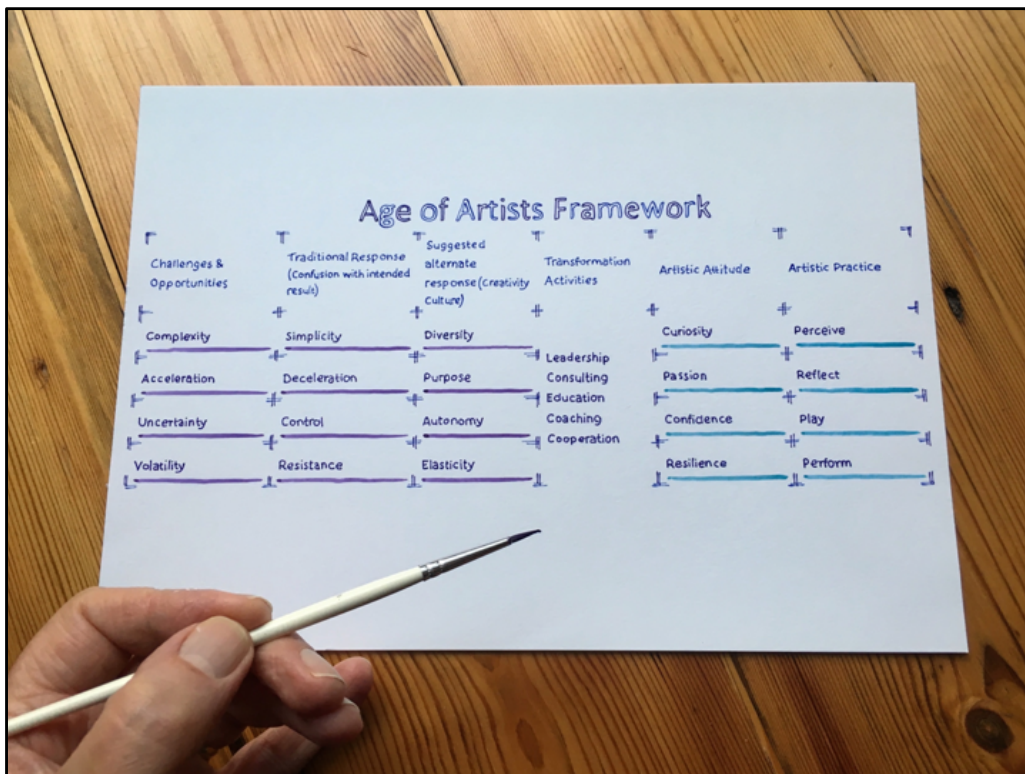
<http://consultingartist.com/water-colour/journey-to-sunset/>



Be adaptive – like Henri Matisse was with his cutouts.

What happens when we play with the running order – add things – remove things.

What is on the critical path and what isn't?



Age of Artists, a consultancy, education provider, and research institute based in Germany.

Their current framework, works from the outside in towards the middle, using artistic practices and attitudes to transform traditional responses. In the model, the organizational situation appears on the left-hand side, while the artistic practices and attitudes are on the right. Transformational activities, such as leadership, consulting, education, coaching, and cooperation connect the two sides and allow the artistic activities to act upon the situations on the left side.

Circumstances, like dealing with a market, that are complex, changing quickly, uncertain, or volatile are all considered. The traditional response in these situations might be to try to simplify things, in the case of complexity; slow them down, in the case of acceleration; control them, when they are uncertain; or approach them with resistance in the case of volatility. However, by using artistic practices and attitudes in a transformational approach we can move our organizations to an alternative response which will provide a more balanced, engaged result. We will have diversity instead of simplicity; a sense of purpose instead of deceleration; autonomy in the place of control; and elasticity rather than numerous rules and exceptions, in the case of volatility.

In adapting a creative mindset, and applying artistic practices to an organizational

situation, we start by identifying the business problem we are trying to solve, then we decide which practice we want to start with: perceiving, reflecting, creating, or performing. We can start with any of the activities and move through the others as part of the process of arriving at the response/resolution of the problem.

In arriving at a resolution, we are best served if we adopt artistic attitudes, like curiosity (like asking why five times, or challenging assumptions), being passionate about what we are working on, being confident that there is a solution, and being resilient enough to bounce back when we experience failures or set-backs. It is the persistence that develops through these activities that is the key to finding a solution.

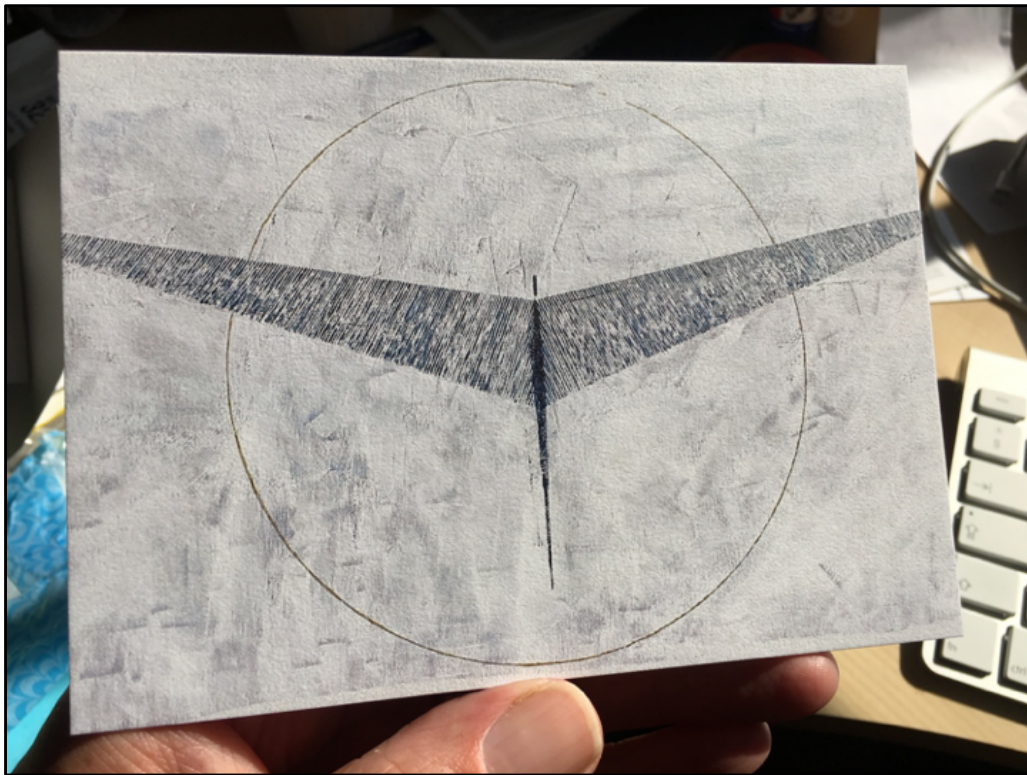
fund further experimentation.

Here's just one of many examples of how a simple project like this can impact people.

"Hi. It wasn't till I found this today that I really thought about what you do. I've always looked at the art and always thought that you are a great guy to have had this idea. However, today meant so much to me. I'm going through some not great things at the moment...so to be enticed out of my house and to find such a beautiful piece and feel that someone had actually done something for me, that I had received some kindness reduced me to tears but also made me happy. Keep going. What you do is amazing on so many levels."



Week 100 – an abstraction showing the sun reflecting on local ponds, left outside a church in Beddington Park.



Halo Effect : Creativity and Your Inner Child. A signed limited edition print – 25 copies were produced – to celebrate Clerkenwell Design Week. They were hidden in the streets of Clerkenwell for people to find.



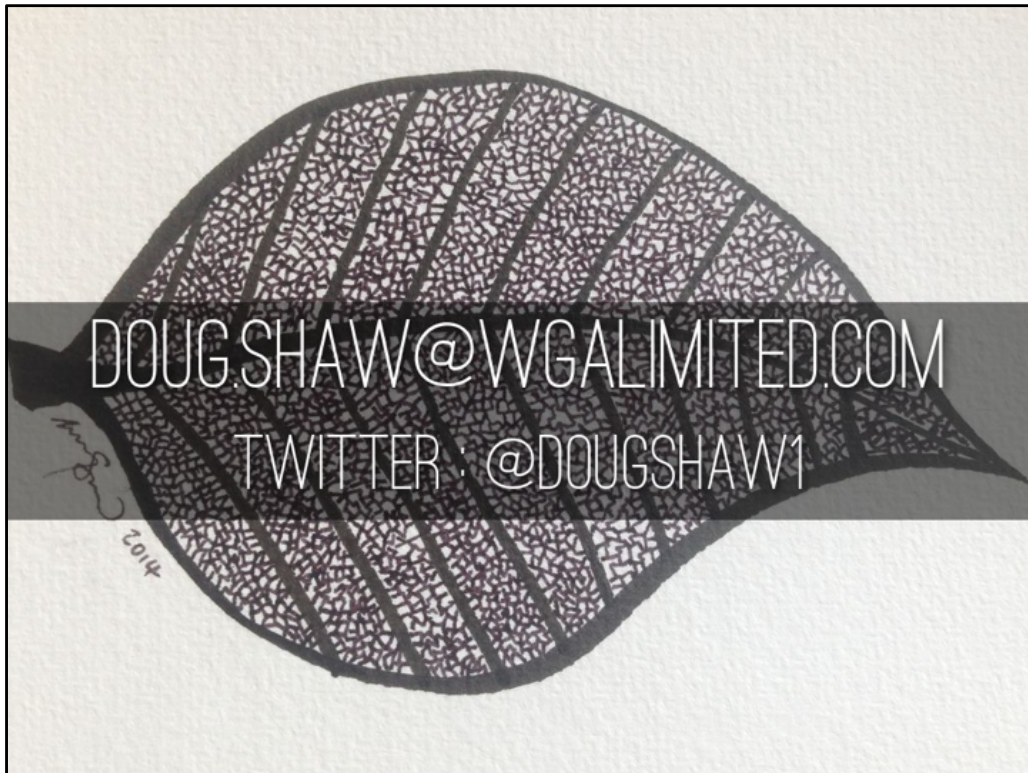
Suggested Reading

Thoughts on Managing a Creative Culture. Creativity Inc. Ed Catmull & Amy Wallace

- Give a good idea to a mediocre team, and they will screw it up. Give a mediocre idea to a great team, and they will either fix it or come up with something better. If you get the team right, chances are that they'll get the ideas right.
- When looking to hire people, give their potential to grow more weight than their current skill level. What they will be capable of tomorrow is more important than what they can do today.
- Always try to hire people who are smarter than you. Always take a chance on better, even if it seems like a potential threat.
- If there are people in your organization who feel they are not free to suggest ideas, you lose. Do not discount ideas from unexpected sources. Inspiration can, and does, come from anywhere.
- It isn't enough merely to be open to ideas from others. Engaging the collective brainpower of the people you work with is an active, ongoing process. As a manager, you must coax ideas out of your staff and constantly push them to contribute.
- There are many valid reasons why people aren't candid with one another in a work environment. Your job is to search for those reasons and then address them.
- Likewise, if someone disagrees with you, there is a reason. Our first job is to understand the reasoning behind their conclusions.
- Further, if there is fear in an organization, there is a reason for it—our job is (a) to find what's causing it, (b) to understand it, and (c) to try to root it out.
- There is nothing quite as effective, when it comes to shutting down alternative viewpoints, as being convinced you are right.
- In general, people are hesitant to say things that might rock the boat. Braintrust meetings, dailies, postmortems, and Notes Day are all efforts to reinforce the idea that it is okay to express yourself. All are mechanisms of self-assessment that seek to uncover what's real.
- If there is more truth in the hallways than in meetings, you have a problem.
- Many managers feel that if they are not notified about problems before others are or if they are surprised in a meeting, then that is a sign of disrespect. Get over it.
- Careful "messaging" to downplay problems makes you appear to be lying, deluded, ignorant, or uncaring. Sharing problems is an act of inclusion that makes employees feel invested in the larger enterprise.
- The first conclusions we draw from our successes and failures are typically wrong. Measuring the outcome without evaluating the process is deceiving.
- Do not fall for the illusion that by preventing errors, you won't have errors to fix. The truth is, the cost of preventing errors is often far greater than the cost of fixing them.
- Change and uncertainty are part of life. Our job is not to resist them but to build the capability to recover when unexpected events occur. If you don't always try to uncover what is unseen and understand its nature, you will be ill prepared to lead.
- Similarly, it is not the manager's job to prevent risks. It is the manager's job to make it safe to take them.
- Failure isn't a necessary evil. In fact, it isn't evil at all. It is a necessary consequence of doing something new.
- Trust doesn't mean that you trust that someone won't screw up—it means you trust them even when they do screw up.
- The people ultimately responsible for implementing a plan must be empowered to make decisions when things go wrong, even before getting approval. Finding and fixing problems is everybody's job. Anyone should be able to stop the production line.
- The desire for everything to run smoothly is a false goal—it leads to measuring people by the mistakes they make rather than by their ability to solve problems.

Thoughts on Managing a Creative Culture. Creativity Inc. Ed Catmull & Amy Wallace

- Don't wait for things to be perfect before you share them with others. Show early and show often. It'll be pretty when we get there, but it won't be pretty along the way. And that's as it should be.
- A company's communication structure should not mirror its organizational structure. Everybody should be able to talk to anybody.
- Be wary of making too many rules. Rules can simplify life for managers, but they can be demeaning to the 95 percent who behave well. Don't create rules to rein in the other 5 percent—address abuses of common sense individually. This is more work but ultimately healthier.
- Imposing limits can encourage a creative response. Excellent work can emerge from uncomfortable or seemingly untenable circumstances.
- Engaging with exceptionally hard problems forces us to think differently.
- An organization, as a whole, is more conservative and resistant to change than the individuals who comprise it. Do not assume that general agreement will lead to change—it takes substantial energy to move a group, even when all are on board.
- The healthiest organizations are made up of departments whose agendas differ but whose goals are interdependent. If one agenda wins, we all lose.
- Our job as managers in creative environments is to protect new ideas from those who don't understand that in order for greatness to emerge, there must be phases of not-so-greatness. Protect the future, not the past.
- New crises are not always lamentable—they test and demonstrate a company's values. The process of problem-solving often bonds people together and keeps the culture in the present.
- Excellence, quality, and good should be earned words, attributed by others to us, not proclaimed by us about ourselves.
- Do not accidentally make stability a goal. Balance is more important than stability.
- Don't confuse the process with the goal. Working on our processes to make them better, easier, and more efficient is an indispensable activity and something we should continually work on— but it is not the goal. Making the product great is the goal.



"We don't need to be taught to make art but sometimes we need to give ourselves the permission to do so. Art is what it is to be human." - Seth Godin