

# Chris bilton's book, management and creativity: an analysis

[Business](#), [Management](#)



In Chris Bilton's book, *Management and Creativity: From Creative Industries to Creative Management*, the author argues that simply allowing employees total freedom will not result in increased creativity and innovation. In fact, he claims that, "Contrary to the myth of the self-motivated, creative worker and the ideology of neo-liberal management, managerial intervention can play a significant part in the creative process." (Bilton, 2007, p. 86). Bilton researches into how the relationship between creativity and management sets out to challenge some of the norms in management theory and practice, along with creative industries policies. His research on the relationship between management and creativity aims to challenge the stereotypical separation of 'creatives' and 'suits'. He examines the way creative people think of themselves as geniuses and like to feel they are different from ordinary folk. To analyze such an argument, creativity needs to be defined, which is difficult. Bilton discusses how, "One of the difficulties with defining creativity is its mystical, quasi-spiritual quality." (2007, p. xiv). Because of this mystical quality, creativity could be claimed by everybody. Creativity is a paradox-being everywhere and nowhere-that is accessible to all, and marketed as a rare commodity. It is a complex and demanding process that entails much more, "...than simply coming up with bright ideas, being inspired, or indulging in moments of spontaneous invention." (2007, p. xiv). Creativity requires crossing boundaries between different ways of thinking, both rationally and irrationally. Definitions of creativity are comprised of various components such as the ideas of duality and paradox, the combination of different ideas into new and unexpected patterns, combinations of innovation and value, of different thinking styles, rationality

and irrationality. Essentially, creativity depends on the assembling of these components into unexpected combinations. Depending on the context, the definition of creativity will vary. Interestingly, Bilton opens his introduction to the book by quoting John Tusa in *On Creativity: Interviews Exploring the Process* (2003): "'Creative', 'creation' and 'creativity' are some of the most overused and ultimately debased words in the language. Stripped of any special significance by a generation of bureaucrats, civil servants, managers and politicians, lazily used as political margarine to spread approvingly and inclusively over any activity with a non-material element to it, the word 'creative' has become almost unusable." (2007, p. xiii). So, not only is creativity difficult to define, but it seems the word in itself lacks value. Based on Western philosophical tradition, creativity has two themes, individualism and innovation, which are discussed throughout Bilton's book. However, the themes show a disparity between creative thinking and creative people from the contexts and systems, which give their innovations and individual talents meaning and value. To simplify this definition, creativity is thinking up new things, while innovation is doing new things. In today's business world, many companies are faced with rapidly changing environments, which is why innovation, resulting from creative thinking, is imperative for survival and growth. From a psychological perspective, creativity contains two separate components. The first being that creativity requires novelty or innovation, making or thinking something new, or a new combination of existing elements. Novelty, on the other hand, is always relative. Margaret Boden categorizes innovation into two levels, 'P-creativity,' where the idea is new to the individual, and 'H-creativity,' where the idea is new to the world.

Secondly, the idea must be useful or valuable. This psychological definition of creativity argues that creative ideas must demonstrate “fitness for purpose.” (2007, p. 3). It is difficult to distinguish between having an idea, and then making it tangible or expressive. A product definition means that a mere idea is not enough to qualify as creativity — action is needed to transform the idea into a product. The process-based definition of creativity is an unexpected combination of elements, which provides a surprising solution to a problem. Creativity cannot solely exist within an environment with total freedom or a systematic environment with carefully assembled and managed people and processes. In summary, the industrial definition of creativity concentrates on individual creativity, skill, and talent. There is economic rationality with potential for wealth and job creation. ‘The myth of genius’ places emphasis on the individual talent, along with the content and task specialization. So when you look carefully at the definitions, there is in fact no essential difference between creativity and innovation. Everyone basically agrees on the importance of ideas and action, along with novelty and value. Bilton proposes a psychological model of creativity as a complex combination of different thinking styles. However, such a model deflects attention from the creative individual towards the system or art world within which creative work takes place. This in turn leads to a sociological model of creativity involving a combination of different types of people, along with a growing interest in the environment or organization which enables creativity to happen. (2007, p. 45). These psychological and sociological definitions of creativity alert us to the network of relationships within which individual moments of discovery happen. The mythology of genius is used to refer to a

way of narrow thinking about creativity, where it is blended with innovation, and remains the exclusive property of a particular type of 'talented' individual. (2007, p. 17). Part of that mythology is the myth of a pure, unfettered individual creativity. However, this mythology may block creativity, as opposed to looking at it as a source of inspiration. (2007, p. 73). Seeing as though it is difficult to define creativity, imagine having to manage this undefined force. Bilton writes, "The separation of creative individuals from their ('uncreative'?) managers and the splitting of innovation and novelty from questions of value and judgment reflects a partial, incomplete view of the creative process." (2007, p. 8). Creative minds cannot be utilized to its maximum potential, without guidance. Therefore, managerial intervention proves to be a significant role in the creative process. According to Bilton, managers of creative teams face two principle challenges. First, they must sustain diversity and flexibility, while overcoming a tendency towards conformity and complacency. The second challenge is to avoid over-specialization and fragmentation, while retaining a balance between specialist and generalist understanding. Managers can intervene in the composition of creative teams through selecting the individual members, and by selecting and modifying the roles and relationships within the group. Creative teams require active managerial involvement, but not through directly controlling and leading a process of innovation. An indirect approach through monitoring and modifying the relationships are desirable. (2007, p. 34-37). In order to successfully manage these creative types, it is essential to know what they want. In general, management needs to know their people, regardless of which industry. To

manage creative people, the most important thing to keep in mind is they are happiest when they get little to no supervision. Creative people tend to be independent, self-starters, so giving them more autonomy can be a powerful reward. They want to be known for their work and ideas, which is attributed by their intrinsic motivation. Management textbooks and studies show that recognition, ownership, and responsibility are key psychological motivators. There is an assumption that 'extrinsic motivation' - the external pressure to meet targets, expectations, and criteria imposed from above - is less powerful and effective, compared to 'intrinsic motivation' - the internal desire to complete a task to our own, and not others' satisfaction. (2007, p. 70-71). Managerial intervention is essential in determining what drives employees in the creative process. In the context of today's economy, a more 'human' approach to management is preferred due to the increase in self-employment and flexible hours. The psychological emphasis on individual self-expression and intrinsic motivation as the basis of work, especially creative work, has infiltrated almost every aspect of the new management style. 'Transactional' leadership, based on systems of reward and promotion, has been replaced by 'transformational' leadership, in which leaders no longer tell workers what to do. Instead, these leaders attempt to inspire their workers with a vision and values, which will make the workers want to complete their tasks out of shared sense of mission and belief. That being said, "Organizational cultures [should] encourage informality and self-expression, allowing workers to play games in the workplace, to enjoy their work and find satisfaction in it." (2007, p. 71). Moreover, today's managers are encouraged to reject control and hierarchy; instead they should favor

and release individualism. The role of management is to enable the individual autonomy and self-actualization of the employee. Managers should not attempt to control the workforce by setting limits and deadlines. In creative management, "...managers seek to remove constraints in order to free individual workers to express themselves, to take risks, and to challenge conventional thinking. " (2007, p. 66). Managers believe workers' performance will improve by removing constraints, and by letting them express their own individual ideas. Thus, management has become a form of non-management, or laissez faire. The new management style is also based on a partial and stereotypical view of creativity as ' freedom from constraints' and ' individual self-expression.' The emphasis on intrinsic motivation in management is echoed in creativity theory. The external rewards of artistic and cultural production remain so small and unpredictable for the majority, that intrinsic motivation seems the only possible explanation for creative work. Even in today's creative industries, it is clear that intrinsic motivation is going to be more important. Those who work in creative industries are highly skilled and highly specialized. Since creativity involves an element of the unexpected and unprecedented, it is difficult to measure achievements. Bilton claims that, " Task-fulfillment, the sense of satisfaction which comes from a job well done, is an important motivation for creative activity and may well precede any offer of external reward in terms of money or reputation. " (2007, p. 72-73). Given the importance of intrinsic motivation in the creative process, it would be easy to conclude that the best thing a manager can do for creativity is to do nothing. But, in reality, releasing creativity is not easy. In fact, who says an individual is necessarily

going to be any more creative if left alone to their own accord. " The mythology of creativity as solitary, divine madness connects with the mythology of management as a machine bureaucracy. These two mythologies, while apparently opposite, actually feed off each other. " (2007, p. 11). Creativity and management must co-exist, in order to put forth creative and marketable commodities. Therefore, the separation of creative and management processes is counterproductive, assuming that creativity consists exclusively in the generation of new ideas, not in their selection, development, or application. Multi-tasking and crossing boundaries between managerial and creative responsibilities are inherent characteristics of the creative process and creative people. While the new management style is based on the unmanageable individualism of creativity and the separation of managerial and creative tasks, it seems as though many small creative enterprises are going in the opposite direction. Instead, they are seeking a closer integration of managerial concerns and creative processes. Creativity is a dualistic process which requires an integration of thinking styles and a group of talents. Managers are limiting creative possibilities by not releasing them. (2007, p. 75-76). Bilton discusses how there is a great divide between the worlds of creativity and commerce. The origin could often be traced back to education. For instance, art majors, science majors, and business majors may attend the same university, but live in separate worlds. Therefore, creative types, like art graduates fail to manage their creativity as a business asset. Andy Warhol is a rare example of an artist grasping the commercial world. Warhol's commercial designer background allowed him to break away from the conventional art gallery, and turn his experimental art into a



commercial commodity. (2007, p. 12). Furthermore, Bilton argues that the specialization of creative education is reflected in an increasingly narrow definition of creativity, based on individualism and innovation. Governments view an economy based on individual creativity as undesirable. Since creative industries deal in intangibles, they are not subject to economic fundamentals such as natural resources, gross domestic product (GDP), export earnings, employment rates, etc. Stereotypically, creativity is seen as unmanageable, which suggests that a creative economy is best achieved through neo-liberal laissez-faire policies of deregulation and commercialization. (2007, p. 15). In today's creative economy, ideas are cheap; in essence, it's what you do with them that count. According to the UK government, the generation of intellectual property is not lucrative, compared to the exploitation of intellectual property rights. Ultimately, individual artists, writers, and performers are the sweatshop workers of the creative economy. In conclusion, creativity needs discipline and leadership in order to exist. Managerial intervention has a significant role in the creative process. However, "intervention here does not simply consist in the imposition of deadlines and targets, but in a more deliberate manipulation of beginnings and endings in the creative process." (2007, p. 86). For the manager of the creative process, the challenge then becomes judging the correct moment to intervene. To be effective, managers have to collaborate with these creative types to define the boundaries of responsibility. A creative manager should empower the workforce by purging bureaucrats, encouraging risk-taking, and seeking inspiration from all employees. Management is a creative process and creativity is a managed process. If

managers and creative types wish to pursue creativity, then they have much to learn from each other. References Bilton, C. (2007). Management and Creativity: From Creative Industries to Creative Management. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.