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A WINNING ORGANISATION IS A  
**CREATIVE ONE**

Creative thinker Nigel Collin looks at why taking the road less travelled and having a creative organisational culture is vital to survival and future growth.



SPECIAL FEATURE

A WINNING ORGANISATION IS A  
**CREATIVE ONE**

## Creative thinker Nigel Collin looks at why having a creative organisational culture that stimulates fresh ideas is vital to survival and future growth - and how to get one.

Ideas are valuable. Always have been. Whether new products and services, new ways to connect with our clients and employees, refining internal processes, meeting challenges head-on or creating new opportunities.

In 1902 an enterprising man had an idea. He owned a stationery shop and in a competitive market he was looking for ways to gain the upper hand. In the days of inkwells when you bought writing paper you would buy it in packages of loose sheets. So our hero decided to glue individual sheets of paper together to make writing things down more convenient. J. A. Birchall of Launceston in Tasmania had invented the notepad – and boosted his sales at the same time

Today, with the financial crisis, increased competition, eco-awareness, technology changing faster than I can write this article, ideas aren't just important, they're vital.

And it's the Creative Companies – the ones that not only have great ideas but also have creativity as a key organisational value – that are better placed to deal with changes in their industry and their market.

But what is more valuable is creating a workplace environment and an organisational culture where ideas and creativity thrive. Where people feel safe, positive and confident to voice their ideas and their creativity without fear of ridicule or judgement. Where ideas are allowed a chance of life, to grow and evolve.

But how do you create such a culture? Creative Companies such as Disney, Apple and Toyota do two things. Firstly they build an organisational culture that stimulates and supports creativity and ideas. Secondly, they put in place processes that allow ideas to flourish. However, you don't have to be a giant to have a culture that stimulates fresh thinking and tap into the creative potential of your people

### Here are some suggestions

#### Give Permission to be creative

Allow your people to be creative and toss ideas around. It's not something you turn on and off or do in a sealed room. Creative and idea generating should be part of what you do on a daily basis.

#### Understand ideas are 'Incremental' as well as 'Big Bang'.

Understand that some ideas will be 'Big Bang' (life changing ones – the ones that revolutionise a company and industry) and that some will be 'Incremental' (ideas that refine and improve things already in existence). Often we seek the next Big thing but the truth

is it's often small ideas that pay huge dividends.

#### Ensure ideas have a place in the world.

Let's face facts. A great idea needs to add value to your business, your people or your clients, otherwise they are not great ideas. So it's important to have very clear objectives in place when generating ideas so they will be directed and serve a purpose.

“Creative and idea generating should be part of what you do on a daily basis.”

### Create a stimulating environment

Your physical surroundings greatly influence your mindset. So to put you and your team in a creative mindset you need to create a physical workspace that is conducive to creativity and not adverse to it. Grey drab boardrooms won't do it. You need to create or find a space, which stimulates creative thought.

### Allocate Time

The creative process needs time and creative organisations understand this. Google for example has '20% Google Time' where employees allocate 20% of their work time to use how they want to in ways they want to. Having time for thinking, pondering, turning off and clearing your mind is essential for the creative process to do its thing. Don't fight it – work with it and find ways to give your team time to think.

### Separate idea generating from idea evaluating

Most people go wrong because they start judging ideas as soon they are thrown onto the table the ideas get squashed before they get a chance to breathe life and evolve. It's important to have a process in place that separates the idea generating part from the evaluating and judging part. ■

*Nigel helps companies and their people be more creative through his 'funnelthinking'™ workshops, keynotes and consulting and is author of 'Think BITS'. More information can be found at [www.nigelcollin.com.au](http://www.nigelcollin.com.au) or contact Nigel at [think@nigelcollin.com](mailto:think@nigelcollin.com).*



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