

Kunzt and Zaken: Dutch Arts and Business Conference

Rotterdam June 4th 2008

Have to risk being thought mad.

Persist in being mad.

To work in spaces that appear marginal, unglamorous, do not attract power and resources.

Be judged by what you do not by your title, credentials.

1. **Innovation more central**, the search for new recipes to combine technologies or to organise ourselves.
2. But though innovation sounds **exciting it's also deeply unsettling**, especially for large, successful organisations, with lots of assets.

Innovation difficult to predict in advance what the outcomes will be and if it is successful it will challenge the status quo. Success means more upheaval.

And managing innovation is very difficult. Can be lead, can create the conditions for innovation to thrive but difficult to manage it in detail, in the same way that manage for quality or efficiency.

3. Jorma **Ollila** when at Nokia, 20k R & D staff out of about 55k.

Mistake of management can be much more costly when dealing with ideas in contrast to manufactured output. Make a mistake with production, then lose it and make it up. Make a mistake **with innovation** then may **lose an idea of huge value**.

Process more like managing and leading artists than engineers.

4. But that process of managing like you are leading artists is often misunderstood.

Take a particular picture of artistic creativity and apply it to business.

Idea of the artist as a lone genius, working in studio or garret. Lonely but brilliant.

In business, idea that innovation comes from **special people in special places**.

Want more innovation need more special people in more special places.

And there is something very true in this: innovation does take special knowledge and creativity often requires retreat into special places which allow contemplation, concentration, experimentation.

But often companies translate this into the idea that creativity is a new separate activity.

Buzzrooms...

5. Truth is that creativity is largely cumulative and collaborative. That true in much of the arts and in business.

To understand and promote innovation have to understand the dynamics of this kind of creative collaboration.

6Cs

6. **Crisis.** Innovation difficult, troubling so it needs to be spurred by something powerful and that is often crisis.

Ice cream cone.

War

Crisis provide cathartic moments, old structures break down.
Art often thrives in cities which in the midst of turmoil, crisis, where new possibilities open up.

Innovators and artists mobilise crisis as a cathartic source of creativity.

7. **Curiosity.** Follow your ideas. Allow yourself the freedom to be curious.

Gilbert and George: it's going right when it feels wrong.

Allowing time and space for people to be curious. Curiosity cultures.

3M

Google time

Importance of being able to **break out of the normal rhythm** and setting of the day.

Marginal time, marginal places.

8. **Combination.** Innovation all about spotting combinations and making them possible. Needs boundary spanners, connectors, intermediaries.

Best business ideas are combinations...

Artistic practice can provide a model for this.

Artists deal in metaphors.

Web itself an example of this. Not just a technical innovation. Comes from a whole slew of sources.

Geek, hippy, academic, artistic. Palo Alto in 1960s.

Guy de Bord society of spectacle, empire of passivity, cult of participation – YouTube generation.

Avant Garde ideas very powerfully in that mix.

9. **Conversation.** Those ideas come from conversations, intense, free flowing that allow ideas to be shared and to grow.

Business often not a good setting for these.

But much artistic practice is.

Michael Boyd, histories.

Conversations: trust and coming together of the cast, key moments in rehearsal.

Creativity happens **in between** audience and performers.

10. But conversations all too easily tend towards consensus without two other ingredients.

11. The first is **challenge**, challenge to the past, the status quo, to conventional thinking.

Artistic world that is more common than in business. Learning how to deal with that, accommodate it. Criticism and self criticism.

12. The second is commitment: turning talk into action.

Swimming.

Artistic endeavour involves personal risk, might all go wrong, bad reviews, very personally associated with it, difficult to hide behind other people.

Being artistic is quite a masochistic experience.

Difficult to innovate unless become committed to an idea. That's what so alarming about it because difficult not to feel rejection of idea is rejection of you.

The personal and the public role have to come closer together.

13. What's at stake?

Not just whether create buzzrooms, or ideas fairs.

Themes of We Think...book. But also YouTube video...

Ed Phelps 2006 Nobel Prize Economics – 20th century mass consumption driven, 21st century about conditions for satisfying work which turn on intellectual and creative challenges, problem solving. Satisfactions of participation and creative activity rather than consumption.

14. But that will require quite different forms of organisation. Ones that encourage collaboration, self management, exploration, decentralised, lead by values. More like communities than hierarchies. Huge shift in organisational dynamics. Not just a question of creating new buzzspaces. But new ways of working and leading.

15. Polish film makers under Communism: experience of being free.

Creative organisations will have to provide more people with a sense of being free at least some of the time.

Work = necessity – something you have to do.

Work as something you want to do, feel is expressive of you.

What will that be like?