



## INNOVATION & CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

*Innovation is the new religion for marketers and brand specialists. To manage innovation requires a new kind of creative leadership but what exactly are the 10 divine qualities of the ultimate Creative Leader, and how do you use them to bring about a heavenly innovation culture at YourCo (in 6 days, so you can rest on the 7th)? Ty Francis, an independent coach and consultant, chips away at some tablets of stone...*

The Nanosecond Nineties have taught us Millennium Marketers one thing for certain - today's sacred cash-cows are tomorrow's false prophets. In a world of increasing globalisation, digitisation, deregulation and commoditisation, despite the most honed marketing strategies, rigorous qual/quant research and compelling promotional campaigns, product lifecycles are increasingly measured in months rather than years, and companies last less than decades. Things are moving at an unprecedented pace in incomprehensible ways towards an unforeseeable end...

With the right sort of leadership to help marketers look way beyond traditional NPD practices, there's a whole new world of innovation waiting to be created. Trouble is, many of today's corporate leadership orthodoxies are not enough to help businesses get to the future first. What is needed is a new kind of *creative leadership* that can release passions, imaginations and energy inside and outside the Marketing Department, unlocking the creative capital of the entire business to get world-beating, explosive ideas to customers quicker than the competition (or your money back...).

Developing and deepening a capacity for Creative Leadership in yourself as well as in your organisation requires a commitment to a number of things...

### 10 DIVINE QUALITIES OF CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

#### 1 *Creative Leaders design cultures that support innovation...*

If marketers are to out-innovate the competition we must reinvent the entire customer offer from the inside out. In short, the emerging challenge for Marketing is to take the helm of culture change, for unless the field of organisational culture is tilled, fertilised and tended, the seeds of innovation will fall on stony ground. The sort of leadership that's needed to design an innovation-friendly culture focuses on two core issues. Firstly, it helps establish an 'unlearning organisation' where people are encouraged to continuously adapt to constantly-changing circumstances, give up their orthodoxies and remain in a productive-discomfort zone, where play and experimentation are rewarded. Secondly, it mobilises

people to use initiative and make change by focusing attention on the bigger picture, making connections, patterns, themes, inter-relationships between what happens inside and outside the organisation.

#### 2 *Creative leaders act with a strong sense of purpose...*

Vision and Mission are words that are over-used and under-appreciated in most organisations. But beyond the bumper-sticker slogans and coffee-mug merchandising of most Marketing Departments, these concepts carry weight. A strategy without a Vision is simply re-arranging the deck-chairs on the Titanic, while a Vision without a clear and compelling Purpose (beyond profit) is empty. Creative Leaders stand for something big - and we're not talking cause-related marketing or bolt-on bits of PR here. Creative Leaders have a more sophisticated view of what organisations are for. They understand that the brand could be a gateway to higher experiences - what Disney calls "transformational experiences" that are not only enjoyable, but that help staff and customers change themselves for the better. According to a recent report by The Future Foundation, companies and brands that add value to people's personal development will reign supreme. What's getting you out of bed at the moment?

#### 3 *Creative Leaders know how to inspire people...*

People in organisations go to meetings all the time but rarely meet and connect in a way that is transformative. Creative Leaders, though, have *contactricity* - they know how to electrify the space between people, how to ensure meetings that spark something, how to provide experience and produce engagement that stimulates personal growth. They actively network and develop partnerships and alliances rather than commanding and controlling. These networks help them access new voices, new perspectives, new passions that revitalise the culture. Creative Leaders also develop important innovation competencies in their companies - like non-linear thinking, systems thinking, risk-taking, relationship building, influencing group dynamics, constructive questioning, working with uncertainty and creative tension...

#### 4 *Creative Leaders seek forgiveness, not permission...*

Creative Leaders are Innovation Activists. They know how to generate heat and how to take heat, because conflict is at the heart of creativity and innovation. Creative Leaders have to develop the capacity to surface, orchestrate and stomach conflict and uncertainty within themselves and among their team. They enable people to encounter difference and diversity, which can be threatening. They challenge the taken-for-granted views that dominate their own, their department's and their organisation's thinking. People don't always thank them for this. Exercising any kind of leadership generates resistance, of course, but Creative Leaders know how to improvise with greater and

greater confidence and understand that persistence with passion breaks down resistance. They get on and get results.

#### *5 Creative Leaders work the BIG Brand opportunities*

How does your Brand help your company to innovate? There's beginning to be a shift in the corporate mindset from a marketing orientation to a brand orientation. With this shift, Brands aren't just badges of identity any more. Increasing globalisation and growth in corporate power means that Brands are becoming increasingly political. In essence, customers now know that as they shop, they vote. People are asking themselves how the brands they purchase reflect and communicate their own values, and are using brands to affiliate themselves with larger communities of interest. Creative Leaders understand that Brands are having to locate themselves at the cutting edge of social change and communicate corporate values in action on a range of issues including human rights, the environment, labour conditions... In this sense, Brands are becoming as much about meaning-making as money-making.

#### *6 Creative Leaders provide insights, not solutions...*

Most companies turn to creativity when they're stuck and want some problem solving. But the true power of creativity is not in putting energy into what you *don't* want (a problem) but in moving towards something you *do* want (a more vibrant future). Creative Leaders know how to manage this quantum leap of mindset. They don't usually offer simplistic answers to complex questions, but provide support for exploration, instead. In a world where markets are changing, business is changing and organisations are changing, leadership needs to change too. With so much chaos and complexity, the Creative Leader's intention is not to push and pull but to give form to what is unfolding through articulating deep questions. What is the question your organisation most needs to ask itself?

#### *7 Creative Leaders release the flow of capital in and through the business ...*

It seems like we've teetered on the edge of a cash-rich recession for a long time. Many consumers have money that they aren't spending, and many businesses have a healthy bottom line P&L in their Annual Reports. Yet money isn't flowing in and through the business in ways that generate extra financial, intellectual, creative and social capital. Creative Leaders work hard to lobby, consult and involve Finance Departments and funding agencies from the earliest stages of innovation projects. They know how to generate a calculated dynamism how to transform FDs from stewards of the company's financial assets to alchemists and entrepreneurs. By inspiring profound innovation that is linked to a bigger purpose, that is distinctive and rooted in the wealth-creating capacity of the business, Creative Leaders really understand how to work co-operatively with others to turn Brand Values into capital value.

#### *8 Creative Leaders maintain focus, not control...*

Most organisations are tight on strategy, loose on vision.

Creative leaders unlock the energy and potential of the organisation by being tight on vision, loose on strategy. They don't worry about getting buy-in as much as about forming creative relationships. They maintain a dynamic connectedness rather than control, relishing a healthy disequilibrium, and role-modelling how to tolerate uncertainty and live with paradox. Creative leaders treat ripe and unripe issues differently. They know how to work with context as well as content, and have a particular talent for noticing what is missing an ear for what's not being said or heard, an eye for what's not being done, what's not present...

#### *9 Creative Leaders know when to revitalise themselves...*

Creative Leadership is hard, but those who have mastered the art know that they must keep fresh by seeking out opportunities to renew their own spirits, to develop allies and confidants, to make sanctuaries inside and outside the business, to reconnect with the worth of their life and their work. Vitally, Creative Leaders understand that they can't mix the ingredients, knead the dough and make the bread rise all by themselves all of the time. Creative Leaders know when it's time to introduce greater diversity, to import some additional creative energy into the fray, and to engage with the only thing that's more powerful than creativity - co-creation.

#### *10 Creative Leaders make space for possibilities...*

(What happens next is over to you... )

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