

HENRIK HYLDGAARD

Hotel Creativity

Check in and change
the destiny of your company



ANKERHUS



forlag

Henrik Hyltdgaard



For more than 20 years, Henrik Hyltdgaard has worked as a brand strategist, concept developer, and creative sparring partner for Danish top executives.

Henrik is also the co-author with Rasmus Ankersen of the books "Opdragelse af en vinder" (Education of a Winner) and "Guldminerne" (The Gold Mine Effect).

Hotel Creativity is based on Henrik's many years of experience as the creative right brain of numerous companies, on his many years of study of the most profitable companies, and last, but not least, on his unique insight into the road to success for the greatest athletes in the world. Innovative thoughts and inspiration arise when such diverse approaches are combined and applied to the task of running, developing, and managing companies in the future. These companies must be both creative and profit-oriented. Hence, creativity will be assigned a new role as the most vital means of creating profit, attaining success, and securing survival for the company in the difficult times ahead. It's obvious, therefore, that creativity can no longer be a passive, romantic spectator watching the company's most critical decisions from the side line. Creativity needs to be held accountable, it must create results, and it must deliver an attractive ROC – Return on Creativity.

HOTEL CREATIVITY

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A N K E R H U S
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Dedicated to Tina Hyldgaard, Jytte & Henry Hyldgaard

Henrik Hyltdgaard

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FOREWORD

A favorite past time of mine is watching from the shore the many ships that sail pass – far out in the horizon. Few of them attract your full attention. The same is the case with the sea of books and theories about innovation and creativity. There are many, many ships out there. And then, suddenly, you notice a distinctly different one, one that stands out from the crowd. The book you’re starting to read, *Hotel Creativity* by Henrik Hyldgaard, is such a book.

We live in a surplus society, in the western world, but increasingly also in other parts of the world. It’s a society dominated by surplus information, transparency, turbulent unpredictability, and disloyalty. Whether you’re referring to customers, employees, or other stakeholders in your company, their loyalty is hard to retain. Faced with this reality, it’s obvious that society has to fulfill a need for innovation and business creativity – in any way possible.

And yet. It’s my impression that companies practice very linear and formally structured innovation, an unsophisticated type of innovation based on the formalism of consciousness and the linear thinking prevalent among academics. This kind of innovation is limited to regular changes of small details which are totally insufficient to ensure the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the company’s brands. *“Devised by the unimaginative consciousness of the top executive, the marketing executive, the engineers and the designers,”* as Henrik Hyldgaard says. This is downloading, pure and simple, the risk of which Otto Scharmer has described in detail in his book *Theory U*; but the subject is given a new vitality in *Hotel Creativity*. I’m seriously worried that the “academism” we’re witnessing all over the world is severely hampering genuine and spontaneous creativity and rapid action, and when we are talking about fundamental innovation, that’s a really stupid, unintelligent risk to run.

Being incapable of realizing that constant innovation of the brand’s value is a fundamental prerequisite for the company’s earnings and that creativity is the necessary means to achieving this, is equally stupid and ignorant and potentially fatal for the company’s future. The need for creativity applies whether the brand has to be

retained or expanded, or whether the internal processes in the company have to be organized, structured or managed. In every situation, creativity has to play a major role. There are many suggestions for how to go about this task. We now know that there's an intimate relationship between creativity and Homo Ludens – the playing human being – and that creativity arises out of the dynamics between the emerging and shaping reality and the dissolving, chaotic circumstances. We're also aware that the capacity of our right brain is enormous and can provide a steady stream of ideas, but it has to be released by the flow of the subconscious. In *Hotel Creativity* Henrik presents his recipe for how we can open up the stream of new and barrier-breaking ideas in the company.

I'm convinced we're on the brink of a creativity revolution which needs to be part of the new leadership paradigm that is becoming increasingly obvious. The future leaders can no longer stick to the hierarchical structure; creativity has to be introduced and expanded to all employees with knowledge authority – or creative authority. Tomorrow's leaders will have to be creative themselves and practice the intensive training in creativity required in order to give value to their company's brand.

The book in front of you will open up a magical new world of creativity, clarify the relationship between creativity and brand, give instructions in how to set up a training cycle in business creativity, and provide a manual for how you and your company can establish your own mental "Hotel Creativity" in your company. If you are excited about Otto Scharmer's *Theory U*, this book goes hand in hand with the world-renowned metatheory.

When you finish this book, your view of innovation, brand, and creativity will have changed fundamentally. Welcome to the new leadership paradigm!

Bent Engelbrecht
CEO
Ankerhus Gruppen A/S



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my deep appreciation to Rasmus Ankersen for dynamic collaboration with mutual sparring and two co-authored books “Opdragelse af en vinder” (*Education of a Winner*) and “Guldminerne,” which is in the process of being published internationally under the title *The Goldmine Effect*. Our collaboration has slowly but steadily prepared me to step forward with my first book.

Thank you to Helle Pagh, my “buddy,” but also my colleague. Without your sparring (read spanking), without your sharp analytical brain, your finger on the pulse, your overview and dedication, without your effort – no book. It’s as simple as that.

Thank you to Bent Engelbrecht, CEO and publisher. Thank you for your support and for believing in the project, and thank you for your acute observations and your ability to spot opportunities.

Thank you to Lars Dencker. You have been my intellectual and aesthetic mentor in terms of content and expressions.

Last, but not least, thank you to my sons Simon and Patrick, and to you, Charlotte, for your love and understanding that I had to go “all in” in my work of finishing this book.

PROLOGUE

Remember the Past – Surf the Future





I was 40 years old, not really overweight, and not by any means at the end of my career when, almost five years ago I collapsed on an empty deck chair among happy charter tourists on the Spanish island of Tenerife. I remember I really felt like Mr. Smarty-pants, and why not? I was carrying Daniel H. Pink's book *A Whole New Mind*, which had been chosen as "Best Business Book" in 2005 by Fast Company and 800-CEO-READ. The feeling of having a vision and being ahead of the game in the field of business management certainly boosted my self-confidence. Granted, I lay on the same type of deck chair as all the other pale, sun-hungry tourists on the same five-star All Inclusive holiday hotel, but obviously I was much smarter than they were.

A good way to start the holiday.

I think it was the sub-title "Why Right-brainers Will Rule the Future" that originally pushed the right buttons in me and made me order this fabulous book.

For over 20 years, the right side of my brain has been my most important asset, having worked with idea and concept development for numerous Danish companies. So, five years ago, with my deck chair in "pool position" I sent Dan Pink a mental "Thank You." Finally it was the right brainers turn to rule in corporate country.

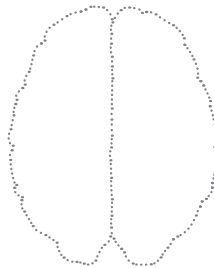
The right brain versus the left brain

The human brain is divided down the middle in two equal halves – the right brain and the left brain. The two brain halves are connected via the so-called Corpus Callosum, and we use both the left and the right halves in everything we do and in all the tasks we perform. If we watch a movie and either cannot understand what is being said (the functions of the left brain) or don't understand the story, the play or the plot (the functions of the right brain), then we'll soon lose interest in the movie. Simply speaking,

the brain is not designed to only use one half or the other. It's designed to use both. The two halves of the brain have two distinct functions, however, when problems have to be solved, since the different types of mental activity needed in order to tackle the issues are physically assigned to either the left or the right side of the brain. Very rarely do the tasks at hand require a 50/50 contribution from each side of the brain. Usually one side is the primary resource in the solution of the problem.

The left and the right side of the brain each perform its own mental activity:

- The left brain
- Uses logic
- Is detail-oriented
- Is guided by facts
- Uses words and language
- Perceives details
- Thinks sequentially
- Is based on realities
- Works strategically
- Is risk averse



- The right brain
- uses feelings
- Is holistic
- is guided by imagination
- uses images and symbols
- perceives contexts
- Thinks simultaneously
- is based on imagination
- presents possibilities
- is risk taking

The extent to which each of us uses the left and the right brain depends solely on the type of assignment we take upon ourselves and how we try to solve it.

That means that no one is born as primarily a left brainer or a right brainer, although it often feels like it, when right through life you have seen yourself and others as one or the other brain type. The very classification of people as either right or left brainers is underscored by our own experience and active self-staging as either creative or logically thinking human beings. We consider ourselves as either-or instead of both-and. For example, I have always wanted to be seen as a creative person, and time and again I have emphasized that image by appearing completely incompetent when it comes to topics such as mathematics, logic, technical matters and systematics. Most people who know me will say that this self-staging has been a little too successful.

The only thing that decides whether we become left or right brainers is the problems we chose to solve and our approach to solving them. For example, the more you have been involved in solving analytical problems, the more you have drawn on and trained the left side of your brain, and the more adept you have become at using the functions of the left brain. Similarly, the more you use your imagination, create something new and also try to sense the value of what you have created, the more you have drawn on and trained the right side of your brain and thus you have become better at using the right brain.

In principle, our consciousness, i.e. the part of our brain activity we are conscious about, can only receive and focus on data from one half of the brain at a time, although we can shift between using the two halves of the brain in a fraction of a second. Unfortunately, however, our consciousness does not allocate the resources of the two sides

of the brain in an optimal fashion. If only our consciousness automatically chose to prioritize the side of the brain that was most suited to solve the problem at hand, then we would be superbly qualified to solve all problems optimally. But that's not the case.

Irrespective of the nature of the problem, it is usually the left side of the brain that routinely comes out on top in most people's consciousness. The reason is that historically the left brain has been considered the most important in defeating enemies, averting dangers and secure survival. For thousands of years – from the time we lived as cave men, then as farmers, industrial workers and finally as knowledge workers – we have concentrated on the functions of the left brain in order to create the necessary security and the results we wanted from a survival perspective. In the same isolated fashion we have cultivated the left brain in our education system and in research. We have inculcated the uncertain vision of the left brain as the most desirable and applied thinking in relation to problem solving. We have been endowed with two halves of the brain, but by and large we only use one of them.

Hence it is only natural that a business leader who wants to avert the financial crisis and consolidate his position as a successful manager is primarily focusing on the type of thinking that characterizes the left side of the brain. He is totally convinced that logic, obvious rationalizations, lean management and a repetition of the successful solutions of the past will ensure his personal progress and the survival of the company in these hard times.

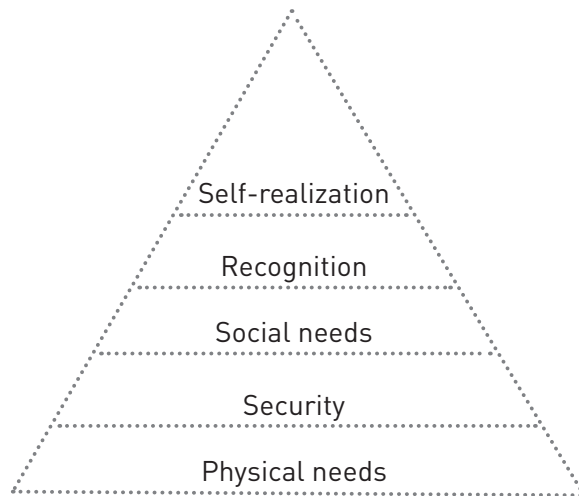
But the question is, now that we have reached the era of the individualists and the innovators, whether the limited functions of the left brain have had their day as management's most effective defense mechanism.

Welcome to the right brain-dominated surplus society

The left brains of the executives and employees have been working overtime throughout the industrial and the information age. The analytical and linear thinking of the left brain has created a constantly expanding surplus society through research, inventions, rationalizations, automation and by making society more effective. Today we introduce many more products and brands than we need or have purchasing power for and naturally only a fraction of the new brands survive beyond the first year on the market.

In the surplus society the lowest tiers of our needs pyramid are unconsciously met. In the surplus society we all have food, drink and clothing, unless we have deliberately withdrawn from society and become destitute. We can all feel socially and economically secure and well protected against hunger and crime, provided we have not, for some reason, drifted towards the lawless enclaves of society.

In the surplus society we primarily spend our mental resources on meeting our fundamental need for love and connection to other people. We strive for the ideal, for recognition, self-actualization and creating value for other people by realizing our full potential.



What we buy and consume must not only satisfy the basic needs at the bottom of the needs pyramid. What we buy must help us meet the top layers of our needs pyramid, and the only way this can be achieved is by designing new products in such a way that they help the individual to become and appear to be a good match for a group or for another person

- to be and appear to be unique, competent and valuable
- to realize his or her full potential
- to create value for other people

In the surplus society our purchases must not only have the necessary and expected quality and functionality which can help meet the bottom of the needs pyramid; they must also represent a harmonious and differentiated identity with a strong personality.

Contrary to the raw, functionalistic products, the sterling brand identity – including humane characteristics – is able to differentiate, represent and communicate our individual identities. The brand identity helps to mold and expand our personal identity in the eyes of others and of ourselves. We expect our expanded identity to be so interesting and valuable that it will satisfy our needs at the top of the needs pyramid. This expanded identity will also help to secure our affiliation with a specific community, find us a nice girlfriend or the coolest buddy, reveal our competencies and abilities and the way we differentiate ourselves from other people as well as the way we contribute to the well-being, development and progress of other people and of society.

In other words, by expanding the personal identity, the conceptualized brand identity can help the consumer fulfill the top of the needs pyramid.

A bathroom trash can, for example, is no longer just a can to throw used tampons, toilet paper rolls and cotton balls. A bathroom trash can must be designed so that it is

more beautiful to look at than other trash cans and be designed as a complete brand identity with an interesting story. The bathroom trash can must represent, expand and convey the individual identity of the owner if it wants to help the owner to fulfill the top layer of his needs pyramid.

Metal turner Holger Nielsen originally designed the VIPP trash can as a practical container for his wife's hair salon, but today the VIPP is a recognized design brand. The world's most distinguished designers are competing to design special "Ltd Editions" of the Danish toilet trash can, and several more artistically designed versions of the bin have been exhibited at art museums such as the Louvre and MOMA. The pedal function of the bin still operates optimally, but the key element is the ability of the brand to tell the story of a wealthy and competent designer who is the driving force behind VIPP's success – a success which VIPP has used as a stepping stone to designing numerous other bathroom and kitchen products. These creations continue the VIPP story where the original bathroom trash can leaves off.

The power of analysis, logic and mathematics that characterize the left side of the brain is incapable of developing product and brand identities that embrace the kind of aesthetics, differentiation and symbolic significance required to help to meet the needs of the top layers of the consumer's needs pyramid.

On the contrary, it's the ability of the right brain to innovate – symphonically and holistically – that is required when developing the company's brands in such a way that they make a positive contribution to the consumers' individual staging and story-telling.

Paradoxically, the left side of the brain has rendered itself more or less redundant by its efficient performance on the road to the surplus society. Tasks and job functions primarily based on the capacities of the left brain have been outsourced to third world countries like China and India where wages are considerably lower. First came the manual labor and mass production, then software programming, CAD drawing and customer service, and later accounting and legal work. The list of tasks now being performed by well-educated and well-adjusted left brainers in Asia is getting longer every year. The left brainers of the developed world have forced themselves out of the jobs market.

Thank you to the researchers, thank you to all the inventors of the automated advanced technology, thank you all the internet developers, thank you all the left brainers and, once again, thank you to Daniel Pink. Thank you is the least one can say to all those who have delivered a much more rewarding future for right-brain-oriented concept developers like me, I thought. During breaks in my reading, behind the sun glasses, I started to think about the most attractive location in Southern Europe to buy a summer home and which type of Cabriolet would be the least impractical when one has to ferry a car load of soccer boys around to the local stadiums.

I couldn't board the plane fast enough to get back to Denmark and then start exploiting all the many new possibilities.

The companies of the past

Flying high and falling hard... you are telling me.

Shortly after my return from my inspiring vacation in sunny Tenerife to the glum and dreary Danish winter I started looking at companies from my new-found perspective. I started with optimism and opportunism, later applied a critical angle, ending up becoming constructive and deciding to write this book.

First the critical angle.

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I believe companies need to establish a new approach to conducting business in the surplus society. The focus on the left brain, on competencies and principles that dominated the past, has no chance of success with the consumers and workers of today, who choose brands and work places based on their ability to meet their needs at the upper levels of the needs pyramid. If your company is unable to assist consumers and its employees in expanding their identity and emotional life it will not survive. These are the rules of the game for conducting business in the future.

But we only see minuscule changes here and there in today's companies. Women, HR and marketing have gained a little more space. Companies blindly jump on board new waves like social responsibility without really understanding what they mean and what possibilities they entail. Generalized comments pushed to extremes. I know, but the trends are clear.

"Green" labels attached to products, brochures and websites have no value or impact. Consumers only recognize companies as being "green" if they are indeed "green" to the very core and deep down into every detail. And they reward these companies. That is the way it is. It's logical and fair. It's unfathomable how "naively hopeful" some companies' marketing departments can behave. They sometimes act as if consumers are weak, ignorant and incapable of critical thinking. But we are not like that.

Unspecified values are scratching the surface of the company, and the only effect they have is to create confusion in the organization and lucrative work for advertising agencies. The employees are drowning in bullshit teambuilding, cutting twigs, building caves and climbing trees in order to reach an understanding of a common set of standardized values that won't effect any change in behavior whatsoever in the everyday life of the company. Companies inculcate general values into their employees despite the fact that what is needed is not a general behavior among the employees but a specific behavior and a culture that is tailored to the individual company. That is, if the goal is to have the everyday efforts of the company's employees act as a credible example and implementation of the unique identity of the company which will expand the consumers' identity and emotional life.

The way I see it, it is still, generally speaking, the analytical thinking of the industrial and information society that dominates today's companies.

Irrespective of books like *A Whole New Mind*, and in spite of some of the most successful companies in the world having taken the consequence of living in the surplus society, the majority of today's companies the world over do as they have always done.

Google, for example, has successfully given many of its employees 20 % time off to work on their own selected projects with no control whatsoever, but very few business leader are contemplating similar initiatives.

It's my opinion that companies who mentally speaking live in the past are neither competent nor competitive enough to create profit going forward. The only reason they survive is their financial and immaterial capital. How long they survive is solely a matter of the size of their capital and the speed with which new and more valuable brands penetrate the product categories of their brands.

The business model of the past

All companies are different, different stories, brands, product categories and organizations. Common to all companies, however, is a model that can be condensed into two basic tenets:

1. Creation of one or more brands with clear advantages that can attract value for the customers
2. Maximum use of the brand value through optimization of turnover and minimization of costs with profit maximization as the ultimate goal.

Most companies have gone through an initial entrepreneurial phase during which they were building up the company's brand value and attractiveness (1) after which all the company's resources were spent on utilizing and capitalizing on the created brand value as effectively as possible (2).

It goes without saying that the basic business model of developing the brand value and then capitalizing on that value still rules in the surplus society.

The difference between running a business then and now is that the various consumer advantages on which the brand is created are of a more symbolic than functional nature. In the surplus society, as previously mentioned, what decides the brand value and the attractiveness is the ability to stage the consumer via the symbolic meaning of the brand.

Another difference between then and now is that the brand value has a much shorter life than previously. In the surplus society a brand must compete with a much larger fast increasing volume of new brands, which all try to entice the consumers on to their side with new attractive and valuable solutions based on fresh currents in the turbulent society. This exercise has a good chance of succeeding with the self-absorbed and disloyal consumers of today, who choose the brand with the greatest value, irrespective of their former close affiliation with other brands.

The static approach to the basic business model, which considers development of the brand value as an entrepreneurial one off, could be fatal in a market society, where the company's brand risks losing its value and attractiveness within an extremely short period.

In this turbulent surplus society the company writes its own death sentence if it decides to live an isolated life inside the systems it has created on how to produce and deliver products and services to its customers in the most cost-efficient way. If the company no longer has an offensive approach to its products ensuring that they remain valuable and attractive now and in the future it is doomed to fail.

The business systems dominated by the left side of the brain develop slowly but surely into bureaucracy and conventions which companies find it very hard to break. At the same time the customers are presented with alternatives, and their wishes, needs and criteria change with lightning speed in the turbulent surplus society. Both these factors devalue the company's brand value and attractiveness many times over, and it happens sometimes slowly, sometimes overnight.

The companies of the past that are dominated by left-brain philosophy do not see, do not listen and are not aware of the fundamental changes in the turbulent surplus society and are incapable of handling the changes in a constructive and offensive manner. They are busy managing the system and survive in the bureaucracy on the slide down the company's value curve.

B&O is a stellar example of a brand that has moved in slow motion while clinging to the achievements of the past and hence has a rather limited brand value to capitalize on.

In a lengthy and self-important innovation process focused on development of "small" improvements to existing products B&O has lost a large part of its brand value. B&O has repeated itself far too directly and respected its glorious past far too much.

B&O was once labeled the "piece of furniture" which every successful human being must have in his home, but the company forgot to reinvent itself and was overtaken by the creative consumer for whom classical and pompous status symbols sold at exorbitant prices was an example of bad taste, limited creativity, and lack of coolness.

Slowly but surely the Internet, the digital technology and the professional consumer has taken over society. Apple is the perfect surfer on the digital wave, whereas B&O has just started paddling into the ocean. The problem is not only that B&O seems slow to adopt the vast potential of the digital technology. The main issue is that all aspects of the brand, its culture, personality, charm and behavior still attempt to transmit via analog antenna signals.

B&O has been left on the market with a huge gap between its stuck-up rich conservative and old-fashioned brand identity and the consumers' self-staging of the

year 2012. The symbolic value of the brand is simply no longer sufficient to offset and justify the inherently uncompetitive combination of product functionality and product price. In my opinion, the dismal figures on B&O's balance sheet are much more closely linked to the reduced value and attractiveness of the brand than to the current economic recession.

B&O's Beosound 5 system, which was reintroduced in 2011 under the name Beosound 5 Encore at only half the original price, i.e. approx. 3,500 US dollars without speakers, is an excellent example of B&O's problems. Beosound 5 Encore is a digital media player that allows you to collect and store your entire music library. The product has many modern features, e.g. access to net radio stations, B&O's MOTS function, which automatically and intelligently creates play lists and playback of music from many different sources. Nonetheless, Beosound 5 Encore still appears old-fashioned, since the system does not have touch screens and does not support Airplay technology – the wireless technology which enables streaming of your iTunes library. With the introduction of such old-school luxury products B&O appears to be at best tone deaf – at worst arrogant – vis à vis the demands and momentum of the consumer.

At the time of writing (January 10, 2012) B&O has conquered the platform and the attention of the international press at the world's largest consumer technology trade-show in Las Vegas, the Consumer Electronics Show. All the talk and attention is centered on the first product under B&O's sub-brand B&O Play, which will represent several less expensive stand-alone products, which will be sold in Apple stores and its web shop among others. B&O's CEO Tue Mantoni makes no secret of the fact that the B&O Play brand targets a new and younger segment of consumers: "The new brand will be more fun, less formal and more lively" in order to appeal to a younger generation who focuses on other things. It should attract people who are not "dedicated disciples" (I thought you only find them in nursing homes) of B&O, but would like to share the products' exclusivity.

The first B&O Play product is a portable speaker system called Beolit 12. It is in every way an extraordinary and epoch-making product from B&O. Extraordinary because it only costs about 1,000 US dollars, because it's designed by one of the most popular Danish designers of our time, Cecilie Manz, and last, but not least, because Beolit 12 applies Apple Airplay technology, which enables streaming of music from e.g. an iPhone, Ipod or iPad. Maybe, in the 11th hour, B&O has tuned its hearing after all and opened it towards the world.

Surf the future

The turbulent surplus society, flooded by self-actualizing and disloyal consumers is a ticking bomb under companies dominated by left-brain ideology. In my view, they are living a far more risky business life than their calculations tell them.

In the turbulent surplus society a novel and more dynamic approach to the fundamental business model is called for.

Clearly, business is still about building brand value and subsequently capitalizing on it, but unlike in the past, the building of brand value can no longer be seen as a one off entrepreneurial task.

In the turbulent surplus society the company is forced to confront the question of how to retain or expand the brand value and attractiveness so that it appeals to disloyal consumers at a more dynamic and offensive level. Retention or expansion of the brand value demand the full attention of management virtually every day in order to avoid that new trends and new competitors reduce the brand value and bury the company in record time.

Consequently, this book starts by describing the consumers of today and tomorrow, who have put heavy pressure on your company's brands and the static approaches to the fundamental business model that reigned in the past. In the turbulent surplus society it's vital to understand why and how consumers navigate coldly and cynically according to the ability of the brand to meet the upper layers of need in the needs pyramid and how consumers react to the turbulent currents of society in this context.

In chapter 2, I describe the type of development and operation of a brand that is required in order to retain or expand the brand value and hence secure the foundation of a continued profitable capitalization of the company. A far more explosive development of the brand is called for in the turbulent surplus society, where the waves of change move with previously unseen power and speed. Consumers have taught themselves to surf on top of the waves, and your company brands have to do the same in order to retain or expand the brand value.

It's not sufficient to understand the fundamental and changed condition of running a business. You must also be able to discern the ripples on the waters of society and perform the perfect surf on the turbulent waves with an exponential effect for the brand value and attractiveness of your company. If you don't see the waves, if you start paddling too late, or if you are not up to surfing, the waves will hit you hard and brutally, with catastrophic consequences for your company. Brand surfing is about recreating and activating the fundamental identity of the brand within the spirit of the time and in high frequency. That's the topic of chapter 2.

Remember the past

I often sense that business owners and top executives are closed in their attitude to new currents and new ways of thinking. Don't give me that, they think. We are in the middle of a crisis. We have more than enough to do just to survive. We are busy cutting costs, making all work processes more effective, managing our business finances more tightly, focusing on the core business and returning to the virtues of the past. Most top executives and business owners think and say that developing the company's brands, new products or new initiatives overall is totally off the radar right now.

Of course the company's economic bleeding has to stop. Of course the necessary measures must be taken to secure the survival of the company in the short term. The danger is that the joy of having reconquered stability leads to stagnation, an isolated focus on best practice and business as usual and also to simple repetitions of the successful solutions of the past. In that case the joy will be short lived. Survival, stability and once again seeing black numbers on the bottom line must only be seen as a necessary platform from where to start surfing the future in an offensive struggle to retain and expand the brand value of the company and hence ensure and strengthen the earning power of the company in the long term.

Once in a while I sense that a company's management is secretly enjoying the necessary (but temporary) and isolated focus on left-brain activities brought about by the recession. Now they are being asked to do what they are best at. No one says it aloud, but a certain satisfaction can be felt among many top executives who have now got a break in their work of formulating visionary strategic plans, developing new ideas, implementing innovation as well as cultivating and respecting creativity – all the things they are not very good at.

Fear of implementing substantial changes in the company stems from former nightmarish experiences and large minuses on the change capacity account. The answer is clear: "Now we've just got everything under control. The organization has fallen into place, the production is running smoothly, and finally our finances are more or less adding up. We are not going to change anything. We have a system that works and we finally have a key we can consult."

Fear of and opposition to the new and necessary changes in the company are the most dangerous companions of top executives on their road to the turbulent surplus society.

The world does not come to a standstill in the turbulent surplus society and neither should your brands and your company. Society, consumers and competitors, everything that is of vital importance to the future of your business is in motion.

It is important to remember, respect and not least use the past actively, for the valuable solutions of the future can really only emerge as new combinations of the solutions of the past. But living an isolated business life in conventional and bureaucratic internal systems – without the necessary offensive approach to the constant changes of the turbulent surplus society could be fatal.

The profit-oriented creative company

The precondition of success for your company in the turbulent surplus society is that you as top leader must stand up and be counted when it comes to supporting the more dynamic and offensive approach to the basic business model. Secondly you must build a company which knows how to surf the future in a way that is optimal for the company's brands.

The companies that are stuck in the left brain-oriented culture and are only concerned with repeating themselves (or other companies) and are draining the last profit out of an aging and heavily reduced brand value, these companies need to change drastically and rapidly.

In the turbulent surplus society the company needs a holistic approach and an ability to balance the analytical efforts and attempts to make the company more efficient with a type of openness, development and creativity that will ensure the vital retention or expansion of the company's brand value.

The most important task of the top leader in the turbulent surplus society is therefore to add the creative and development-oriented power of the right side of the brain to the company's organization and culture.

Establishing the right side of the brain in the company does in no way mean that the left brain should be eliminated. The company must be whole. The products have to be distributed as rationally and as fast as possible to the largest audience that is profitably feasible. And they have to be delivered in a timely fashion. The product quality is still crucial and must be controlled, and the production should be made steadily more efficient, with the goal of securing a competitive price and the largest possible margin. But the strength and competencies of the left brain can no longer stand alone, and they do not have a monopoly when it comes to wearing the yellow jersey in the everyday business of the company.

In the profitable companies of the future the left brain has to be content with the role as water boy and rider's aid in the race where the right brain is taking the lead. It will be employees with competencies within the right brain-oriented disciplines such as empathy, intuition, design, story-telling and symphonic constellations of new valuable and differentiated concepts who will be wearing the yellow jersey when it comes to retaining or expanding the value of the brand. And it may be these employees who are better at grasping how a crisis, which is receiving enormous media attention, should be handled with the right combination of integrity, honesty, warmth and charm. It may also be those people who know what it takes to make the employees feel the necessary ownership of the company's goals.

The right brain-oriented employees will undoubtedly play a decisive role when it comes to securing the victory of your company in the intensive competition for the self-absorbed consumers and employees in the turbulent surplus society.

The companies of the future should not be EITHER-OR but BOTH-AND. They should be neither ultra-conservative with an isolated tight grip on the calculator and be unable to think of something new – nor hyper-creative without control of the operating budget. The companies of the future should be capable of uniting the two opposite types of company into, what I have taken the liberty of calling "the profit-oriented creative company." They have to be both profit-oriented AND creative.

GOAL	<i>Profit first</i>	→	<i>Creativity second</i>
MEANS	<i>Creativity first</i>	→	<i>Profit second</i>

The profit-oriented creative company has realized that creativity is not only a decisive means of creating top line, bottom line, and rising stocks, but also an absolute necessity when it comes to avoiding the form of stagnation where the company's brands are in danger of drowning in the society's turbulent waves of change. It has also realized that management, organization and improved efficiency are crucial means of drawing the most profit out of the creative effort. The profit-oriented creative company has understood that profit is the overall objective of the company and that creativity is only a means to reach the goal, but on the other hand the most effective means.

The profit-oriented creative company appreciates that in order to increase profit it is necessary to ensure that creativity has the best possible working conditions in the organization, since it is creativity which will help retain and expand the brand value and hence the fundamental precondition for creating profit.

The profit-oriented creative company realizes that creativity must never be a goal in itself but should be viewed as the life-sustaining means to secure the profitable company of the future.

One of the most innovative business men in the world, the late Steve Jobs, did indeed live out the both-and philosophy. When he returned to Apple in 1996 he was focused on running the company based on the "Think Different" philosophy. This way of thinking acted as a constant internal "bench press" in the company whether new products or new forms of communication were being developed, and it set a clear agenda for all other brands. But "Think Different" was not enough for Steve Jobs. According to him, the company, which at the time was in the middle of a crisis, had to keep another and equally important goal in mind: "Think Profit." Steve Job also focused on the profit-oriented business. He did that by, among other things, introducing a new, simplified and focused product strategy where every new product had its specific placement in Apple's product development matrix: "Private – Prof" on one side, "Desktop – laptop on the other. Apple opened its online store and cultivated a targeted branding in a perfect balance between the Apple personality and the functionality, user friendliness and design of the products. The results of the combined focus on "Different" and "Profit" has turned Apple into the most valuable company in the world. Apple is the ultimate example of a profit-oriented creative company.

It's your own and your employees' creativity that enables the company to drive the explosive brands and surf home the maximum profit for the company. Chapters 3 and 4 and the concluding epilogue of this book describe how you add the right brain to the company; how you improve the creative competencies and take the first steps towards formulating your own version of the profit-oriented creative company.

The ability of the company to subsequently implement the ideas internally in the company and externally in the market – and also create satisfactory revenue from the

developed brand value – plays an equally important role, as already mentioned, in the struggle for survival and profit. Creativity has no value or effect without a subsequent profitable realization of the ideas. Innovation, organization and project management and other important parts of the management universe are not topics of this book, however. The main focus here in Hotel Creativity is business creativity.

My suggestions to the companies that decide to make the journey towards the profit-oriented creative company with a license to operate the profitable brands of the future are directed at high (the CEO) and low (ordinary employees). First and foremost companies have to hire a different type of CEO. The top executive of the future should be able to act as the company's "Creative Executive Officer" and be the vanguard in the company's creative work. The new CEO and the top management of creativity is the subject of chapter 3.

Chapter 4 tells the company's management and employees to stop whining and giving excuses for why they lack creative talent and rather get started on the most effective training in business creativity – "High Performance Business Creativity." Nobody is born creative. Everyone can learn to become more and more creative. It's only a matter of training one's business creativity in the most effective way.

Last, but not least, I suggest that the new "Creative Executive Officer" of the company take the initiative of kicking off his own, his employees' and the company's creative revolution by establishing the ultimate training facility in business creativity – Hotel Creativity, which is the subject of the epilogue of the book.

I am convinced that if you step into the role as your company's Creative Executive Officer, cultivate executive creativity, conduct optimal training in business creativity, and let your employees check into Hotel Creativity according to the needs of the company, then you will be able to surf the future and effect a radical change in the destiny of the company and its profitability.

Surf's up. Welcome to Hotel Creativity.

CHAPTER

1 Son-of-a-rich >> The Consumer of Tomorrow





Economically speaking, people in our part of the world are becoming more and more well off. The current recession is only a typical real economics pit stop before the economy and consumption will again rise to new heights. Looking at the economy and the amount of money people have at their disposal from a perspective of 100 years, it's evident that everything from potato, oil and financial crises to world wars and burst IT bubbles are only small variations on an upward curve.

The trend-setting consumers of the surplus society are all sons and daughters of the founders of the welfare society – the hard-working generations, who over-saved and who have created the extremely affluent consumer for whom money has never been anything but a luxury problem. Simple survival and materialistic comfort are no longer the concerns of the wealthy consumers. They are focusing entirely on having the upper needs of their needs pyramid met. Life in the surplus society is first and foremost about self-actualization in a way that means lots of friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, social memberships, a successful working life, prestige, recognition, and last, but not least, creating meaning for themselves and value for the world around them.

The wealthy people of the future are not necessarily those with the most valuable equity portfolio. Money is only a means, not a goal in itself, in a time where you don't have to gather supplies in order to secure survival, but live your life to the fullest by meeting the upper layers of the needs pyramid. Economic welfare has never been directly proportional to mental welfare, and strangely enough now that society is so well off, it still isn't.

Rather, the wealthy of tomorrow are those with the capabilities (and sufficient financial resources) to do the following:

1. Realize themselves and exploit their full potential creating value for themselves as well as for other people.

The eternally young wannabe super dude focuses all his energy on using his relatively well developed right brain to write and publish books which try to find and explore new and more valuable avenues in the conservative business environment where he has been working all his life.

2. Gain access to social communities

He tries to become a member of an exclusive circle of international and progressive writers who is "Up against the establishment."

3. Ensure prestige for himself and recognition by society

He tries to be recognized as one of the leading international opinion makers in his home country.

Guess Who?

The Mentally Rich of Tomorrow

The competitive identity

In the surplus society identity plays the leading role.

Whether the goal is to have friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, prestige, recognition or a feeling of having exploited one's potential fully for the sake of others and oneself, our identity is the means to reach the goal. It's who we are seen through our own eyes and through the eyes of others, and identity is the key to meeting the upper layers of need in the needs pyramid.

We create our personal profile on Facebook, various dating sites, and LinkedIn and hope the profile will attract new friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, "followers," business connections and potential employers. In the TV show X Factor the judges are not only focused on the vocal abilities of the talent, but also, to a large extent, on the unique artistic identity of the contestants, because they know that's what the audience is attracted to. At a job interview the applicant is not only asked what he or she knows, but also why his or her identity would be an optimal match for the company. In the club scene it's not primarily about love at first sight, but rather a more or less conscious search for the perfect match between two identities – which may actually be the same thing?

The most extreme struggle related to identity takes place among very young people. Several surveys among teenagers show that they, more than anyone else, want to be famous. For something. Some target their efforts and engage their talent for sport, singing, acting or something else. But the vast majority strives towards and settles for herostratic fame, i.e. a fame based on less admirable behavior.

Participants in some sex-fixated reality show deliberately choose to take the lead – and the limelight – by jumping into bed with one of the other contestants. Others

upload movies on the Internet, where they practice train surfing, happy slapping, jack ass stunts or hardcore mistreatment of animals.

This identity-oriented struggle is fought not just by exposing one's talent, but also by rebelling, creating a scene, or through provoking behavior. The goal is the same – to create attention around one's identity.

Simply speaking, life has become a struggle for identity, and we humans are not only interested in our own identity, but also our competitors' identity and those from whom we can learn and borrow and those we are attracted to – both unattainable celebrities and our close acquaintances or colleagues.

Social media, reality TV, talent and portrait programs, the tabloids, and paparazzis, all are undoubtedly here to stay, and these phenomena are going to develop new standards, formats and heights as part of the ultimate "ID Peep show."

Reality TV has, in fact, existed as long as television has been around, but it accelerated around 2000, when reality shows like "Big Brother" and "Family Robinson" were produced. Participants became celebrities and VIPs overnight, and since then, a thick layer of reality has been painted over virtually all modern successful TV programs. And the approach to every reality show seems to be that nothing is sacred. Sex, disease, death, unhappiness and taboos are exposed. Everything is fair game. Everything is entertainment – for that's what reality is.

More and more staged and dramatized reality. More and more extreme and advanced reality, where the purpose and the entire concept of the experiments is to break barriers – all in the name of entertainment. Like never before, these programs expose the contestants – for good or bad. The only thing that matters is that they have a high entertainment value. The goal to attract as many viewers as possible always justifies the means.

After the first relatively innocent dating shows were introduced it became barrier breaking to find a mate on TV. Today one of the popular Danish dating shows "Today's Man" is breaking taboos by letting homosexuals, seniors, and cashiers seek compatible mates on its program.

Naturally, you find the most outrageous extremes in the cradle of reality TV, the United States. Here earlier match making programs like "Bridezillas" have been substituted by a reality game show, where several prospective brides compete in a number of more or less contrived disciplines. The winning bride gets what she wished for: a breast implant operation. The highlight of the program is when the bride, standing at the altar, literally lifts the veil and shows her prospective husband the result of her operation.

This type of disrobing entertainment has great attraction – not only for viewers, but also for the contestants. There is an immense interest in being accepted as a contestant on a reality show – everyone seeks his or her fifteen minutes of fame – which

means a high exposure of their identity. The plot of many reality shows is indeed shaped as a personal elimination race, which fully matches the contestants' competitive and uncompromising approach to creating attention around their identity.

Realization of a valuable and attractive identity, or a *self*, as it's called in psychology jargon, is no longer something that is nice to have, but a must have. It's safe to say that we humans have become obsessed with our own (and other people's) *self*. Almost 80 years after Kurt Goldstein introduced the concept and Abraham Maslow adopted and developed it within his 'hierarchical motivation' psychology, self-actualization has become the pivotal point in our lives as well as in our economy.

How do you realize or actualize yourself?

Maslow defined self-actualization as the need for self-fulfillment, more specifically the desire of the individual to realize his or her full potential.

Here in year 2012 self-actualization is obviously not only a matter of realizing one's own potential in the classical sense – to feel that there is a purpose in life and that one's actions have value for others. Self-actualization in our time is primarily a matter of securing the necessary personal competitive edge in what has become a totally identity-fixated society. Self-actualization is associated with success, and we measure our success on what others think of us, while we also engage in rival competition with them.

Realization of an attractive and competitive *self* has become the focal point in our everyday decisions, big and small, different from the classic needs pyramid. We may not specifically express it as self-actualization in our everyday life, but nevertheless that is the center of our thought process, consciously or unconsciously, when we make all our decisions, from buying new clothes for our children, having a new haircut, uploading a new playlist on Spotify, making a career change, or formulating a whole new vision of how we want to live our lives. We, as consumers, stage our identity and surround ourselves with the right props in the drama about success and actualization.

The most important question to answer in life for most people of today and tomorrow is therefore: How do you realize yourself?

This is my answer.

Self-actualization is when you accept your desired *self*, when you sense and experience that you are and are perceived as the person you want to be. In other words, a successful experience that may help to answer the previously mentioned key question in life.

The logical precondition of self-actualization is a self-visualization of who you want to be, and later an ability to zero in on and perform the actions that ensure the affirmation by yourself and by others that you are, indeed, the person you want to be.

Assuming that the affirmation of the desired *self* must meet our uppermost needs in the needs pyramid, a strategically-oriented approach to self-actualization is required. We need to define some clear goals for the fulfillment of the highest needs of the needs pyramid. What kind of acceptance do we want? What type of girlfriend or boyfriend do we want? What social communities do we want to belong to? Who do we want to be and what value do we want to create for others? Once we know the objectives of the fulfillment of the upper layers of the needs pyramid we can define the means – the desired *self* (identity) – which will meet these goals.

When defining the desired *self* we have to make some honest considerations about who we are right now and a realistic estimate of the potential we possess. But we also have to realize how demanding and intense the competition for what we want to achieve will be. The desired *self* has to be attractive enough to come out on top in the competition about sweethearts and the membership of social communities. It has to be ambitious enough to realize our full potential, and also be loaded with actions that are valuable for others beside ourselves. But the desired *self* has to be realistic in order receive affirmation in this turbulent, competitive and over-communicated world.

But despite the fact that self-actualization is the overriding top priority in this identity-oriented society the quest to seek affirmation of the desired *self* is seldom a series of deliberate actions. Rather, self-actualization is most often a subconscious process, with intuition at the helm. Since we have spent countless hours refining, demonstrating, and exposing our identity and relate to other people's identities we are intuitively drawn to elements that confirm our desired *self* and similarly retreat from people, activities and products that generate the opposite effect. In a fraction of a second we know how to decode the people we meet and detect whether they can help us confirm our desired *self* or not.

For example, we have developed an ability to rapidly and with relative certainty gauge the networking value in a large gathering or among conference participants, and out of the corner of the eye we sense whether the chemistry is there and whether it is a match or a mismatch. This process takes place within the first 30 seconds of meeting new people. It's the same tactic we apply when, in a blinking of an eye, we choose or reject goods on the supermarket shelves. We act quickly and are extremely receptive to what strengthens our self-image and identity.

The losers of the surplus society

The major losers of the surplus society are those individuals who don't know how to work strategically, dynamically, creatively, realistically, and with a vision to pursue their self-actualization.

These are young people who e.g. are dreaming of an identity as pop stars, those who sing with head phones on and believe they have a fantastic voice. The tone deaf and incompetent parents have most likely encouraged the hopeful youngsters for several years. Suddenly it's time to have an audition to X factor, and the naïve dreamer real-

izes (on public television and in front of the merciless judges) that the desired *self* is a long way off from receiving affirmation.

Apparently there are many eternally confused people who cannot find their desired *self*. Low self-esteem has transformed them into identity-seeking nomads for whom the grass always seems to be greener on the other side of the fence. Those people don't know how to surf independently and competently on the turbulent waves of society, and they can expect a rough treatment in the mental washing machine. They follow events in society and constantly make pathetic attempts to copy the stars and celebrities of society. For people with low self-esteem, searching for the substance or the core of their desired *self* is like treading water in a strong undercurrent. They are being seduced by the currents of society, because they have no independent foundation on which to anchor their identity.

The losers are also those who have chosen to come to a complete mental halt. They have found their defense against the turbulent currents of society: reaction and reassuring retroactivism, rather than action and curiosity. The surf board has been thrown in the attic. They are paddling nowhere, neither today nor tomorrow. Constant self-development and self-actualization is seen as too demanding and appears completely overwhelming. They prefer to accept a slightly outdated and less competitive identity (with a touch of self-satisfaction it's not all that bad). Wife, children, career, retirement savings and a circle of friends are all in place (for now), so why pressure, update and expand one's identity? Things are going fine (for now at least).

The winners of the surplus society

It's important to understand that the journey up the needs pyramid and intense self-actualization is *not* about who is the smartest. The currents of society are numerous and diverse. Power, lots of money and Gucci is the cream of the crop for some and the bottom of the barrel for others. The winners in the surplus society are not necessarily those who are doing well on paper; if so, there would most likely be fewer affairs, depressions, overdoses and suicides among the greatest stars of society.

I believe the winners are those who have managed to establish a conscious, open, honest, independent, fearless and offensive mindset in relation to themselves, to society, and to the many possibilities that life offers.

In my opinion, those are the ones who know how to define a sincere, ambitious, and attractive desired *self*. These people have the ability to convert their thoughts into effective and valuable actions that will confirm their desired *self*, and give it meaning and value, also for others. They really understand that "you are what you do."

Self-actualization is just as demanding and complicated to master as it sounds. That's why it feels so complicated, confused, and frustrating for most of us. Besides, self-actualization is a taboo subject among people, unless we are talking about regular, sensible job ambitions and traveling around the world. Personal branding and

dreams of ruling the world and of fame are considered naïve and unappealing. That means we cannot even talk to other people about what is, at the same time, very important and very difficult for us, for self-actualization gives the appearance of self-importance, which, in a certain sense, it is.

In reality, self-realization is not synonymous with egotism at all, but is often regarded as such. Egotism belongs in the realm of yesterday's poverty. Egotism means always thinking about oneself first; always being the one who demands his share even if there is not enough for all; never giving a thought to others.

But there is a gigantic difference between the simple egotists of the past and those I call the self-ists.

Self-ists are all "sons of riches" who have directed their attention towards meeting the needs of the upper tiers of the needs pyramid. What occupies the thoughts and behavior of the self-ists is the actualization of the desired *self*, the realization of their full potential for the benefit of others as well as themselves, and also their identity-based competitive power on all the "markets" where they operate.

Self-ists are dynamic. They have realized that their identity has to be in constant motion and under development if they want to maintain their value in the turbulent society, where individuals who have come to a standstill are left behind in the field. Self-ists have learnt the art of surfing on the current of the *Zeitgeist* in their pursuit of meeting the needs of the upper layers of the needs pyramid – for the benefit of themselves and others.

These days not only socialists but also self-ists are keenly focused on helping, supporting and creating new communities with others. They do it because they can. They don't have empty stomachs but excess energy to think about and to create value for others. But they don't do it solely for the sake of others. They also do it because they know that the image about the strong, charitable, responsible and creative team player is excellently suited to their identity in a time where the world as well as life in general has become more unpredictable and uncertain.

Self-ists are not only the mentally wealthy of the future and the clear winners in the turbulent surplus society, but also the dominant consumers who decide the fate of your company.

The "self" absorbed consumer

The symbolic significance of the brand

The affirmation of the desired *self* may occur in the way we perceive our own actions. If that affirmation is to provide us with friends, sweethearts, communities, prestige and respect, other people will have to experience and affirm our actions as well. In other words, only our perceived identity can help us meet the upper layers of need in the needs pyramid – and provide the necessary personal competitiveness.

In order for our actions to have value for others they need to be experienced by others.

Although some claim they are immune to affirmation of their desired *self* by others, most people admit they would like to avoid misconceptions about who they are and what they can do.

Have you ever been in a situation where you suddenly feel that you are perceived differently from who you are – and want to be?

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Let's take a simple and typically masculine example:

You are an executive with a large company car, a powerful symbol of your capabilities. Your wife is going to visit her sister who lives a good distance away and borrows your car. That means you are going to drive her (the family's) own car, which you yourself has argued had to be as inexpensive as possible, since you have the company car at your disposal for family outings. Furthermore, to support your argument, you said to yourself that you wouldn't have to drive the car. You come across some close friends and you beep cheerfully from the family car. They know who you are, of course, and what your abilities are and know what your other car is. You also meet some people who are unimportant to you. You pretend you don't see them, and you couldn't care less how they see you. Suddenly you are stopped at a red light. A large and expensive car comes up beside you, driven by a former colleague who has been successful abroad. The newspapers have written about him. You have not seen him for 10 years, and he doesn't know anything about you. And now you are stuck at the junction and you look at him and don't have time to divert your glance before he waves at you. He has recognized you, and you are sitting in the Fiat Punto projecting the story about a person who is going from bad to worse. Damn. She'll never borrow the car again.

And how about an example from the female battlefield:

You have just picked up a couple of snotty and filthy kids from the nursery school. There are holes in their pants, the toes of their shoes are scratched, and their hair is a mess. The children not only look shabby, but also dead-tired, slightly hysterical and hard to reach. But the daily shopping has to be done, nevertheless. In the supermarket, with the filthy, noisy kids in tow, you meet an old rival from high school whom you have not seen for many years. She cruises confidently through the supermarket and you just catch a glimpse of high-end products, fresh herbs, organic fruit juice and a large filet mignon in her shopping cart when she stops and says, "It's been a long time. What have you been up to?" Here you are, looking slightly wind-swept, stressed out and irritable with the basic ingredients for an emergency dinner – hot dogs – and have to make small talk near the crowded dairy isle in the supermarket. At the same time, your two adorable, but by now completely exhausted boys loudly demand your attention. You look utterly awkward and the epitome of the "uncool housewife." She should have met you on a Saturday morning and witnessed the happy family you are, most of the time, with lots of surplus energy. The right food products in the shopping cart, which tell their story of your "half-pro" level of Italian cooking. Your husband

as crisp as you can make him; he's not too bad, really, when you take a closer look. Quite a good choice, actually, although you had your doubts way back when. And of course your children would be in their new outfits, a delicate mixture of H&M and a few choice accessories from Ralph Lauren bought on the trip to New York as icing on the cake. Then she would have had a taste of it (your identity).

Most of the products we use and most of our activities elicit certain associations; their names have a symbolic significance for us – what we call brands.

It's this symbolic significance of a brand that may contribute to affirming or negating the desired *self*.

The brands we are attached to as consumers act as our mouthpieces. They place the products we surround us with in a symbolic context and thus stage us in relation to our surroundings. The symbolic significance of the associated brands enables us to project our desired *self* to the outside world,

The symbols with which we surround ourselves and use to affirm our desired *self* are called *the extended self*, relating to the fact that they attempt to define our identity in the same way as the scenery at the theater tries to define and frame the play. Today's brands are more than just functional products that fulfill our practical needs. They have become an integral part of our identity.

This is not a new conclusion, by any means, as demonstrated by this quote by William James from 1890:

“A man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands, and yacht and bank-account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast and down, – not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all”.

Developments up until today have confirmed the symbolic significance of the brand, which has become the most important and overriding driver of consumer behavior in the surplus society. In his first book *The System of Objects* the French professor and sociologist Jean Baudrillard defines consumption as “An activity consisting of the systematic manipulation of signs.” Take it!

The self-staging consumer

The intense pursuit of meeting the upper layers of need in the needs pyramid that human beings engage in and the active, associated use of the symbolic significance of the brand have changed the consumer forever. The self-assured consumer never leaves the affirmation of the desired *self* to chance. All aspects of the consumer's personality and behavior are staged through the symbolic significance of the associated brands in a way that makes the identity attractive and convincing as well as attention-grabbing.

The most self-absorbed consumers constantly prop up their identity with brand symbols as if they were part of some live Friday night entertainment, and they maintain the position as official style guru. The symbolic significance of the brands we use to actively stage ourselves “in the old world” consisting of purely material objects is not the only thing we use to maintain our specific style. It’s not only a matter of the things we live around, wear, drive and what we spend our time on with whom. In the new online world the self-staging is taken to extremes. We expose ourselves and our consumption and eagerly present our latest “trophies.” We parade our brands and thus expose our *self* as part of the “normal” daily self-staging. As a result of their personal blogs ordinary people are proclaimed style gurus and oracles of consumption.

One of the most outrageous examples of this movement is blippy.com, which allows its users to exhibit and review their favorite purchases in real time, so that others can follow their consumption. Like Twitter, you post your purchases and you can follow other people. You decide in which shopping categories you want to publicize your purchases. At the same time it is possible to link the posting to online purchases on iTunes, Amazon.com etc., and consumers can decide that all they buy on a specific credit card will be posted on their Blippy profile.

A similar example is whosrich.me., which profiles itself with the tagline, “Want to see what your friends spend their money on?” Via a simple interface the user can upload a picture of his or her latest purchase accompanied by information about time, date and price. If you want to tell the world what you have bought immediately after you leave the store the page also has an iPhone application where you can upload trophies “on the go.”

Today’s consumers obviously do everything in their power to attract attention to themselves and be assessed based on what they buy.

All serious music services like Spotify or iTunes are linked to Facebook, Twitter and other social media enabling the users to constantly flash their taste in music and music purchases to their social network. The purpose is clear. Look at my playlists and you know who I am. Or, as the upbeat and musically literate Danish radio station, P3, puts it, “You are what you listen to.”

The business community has been hit by “free agents” and “personal branding.” The most competent employees of today stage themselves as unique and specialized. “Top performers” in business have their own blogs and share their professional experiences, knowledge and attitudes on professional social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. They also write columns and comments in newspapers, magazines, and on the webpages of radio and television news. The successful employee of tomorrow will not remain “the company man” forever, but rather be his own brand; a brand that is contracted out to the most attractive employer who is able to pay, for a limited period of time. The personal, professional branding is not just a matter of staging oneself through the symbolic value of the brand. We also list the companies we have worked for and collaborating partners. Our resume is actually one long ‘name dropping’ of names with symbolic significance. And our friends on Facebook,

followers on Twitter, and contacts on LinkedIn contribute, to a large extent, to the staging and actualization of our professional identity.

I predict that tomorrow's consumers will be even more self-staging than today. The more conscious we become of the importance and effect of our self-staging, the more we will promote it.

The current majority of consumers who are still fully involved in meeting the lower needs of the needs pyramid (a phenomenon that can be observed in the shopping centers outside the metro area), is unable or not interested in "consuming" as part of their active self-staging and self-actualization. But I am convinced that, as society advances, the focus of this large group of "unprofessionals" will shift once they reach the higher levels of the needs hierarchy. In the future we will all consume in a way that stages and actualizes our desired *self* in the optimal fashion. Some will obviously be more competent at this than others.

Therefore I have deliberately ignored the type of consumers who cannot grasp or appreciate the way society is developing, let alone define or act out their own identity in that context. As I see it, it makes no sense to spend time to study a dying race. Your company is not going to live in the past, where quality, functionality, and a reasonable price sufficed, but rather in the future identity-oriented world, where the consumers' extreme self-consciousness is in charge of the game of profit.

The attention-grabbing consumer

As previously mentioned, the desired *self* must be experienced and affirmed by others before the self-staging can meet the needs of the upper tiers of the needs pyramid. You need to attract the attention of the surrounding world in order to get the necessary external affirmation of the *self*. If you, your identity, and your actions remain unnoticed the '*self* party' will never really get off the ground.

The self-staging consumers have learned the basic rule of communication. They are keenly aware of the fact that they need to attract the world's attention in order for the story about their desired *self* to have any chance of reaching the recipients. They are clever story tellers and know that in order to succeed in attracting the world's attention their performance must be exceptional, especially the brands they surround themselves with.

"My Super Sweet 16" is a reality show on MTV. Here teenagers with super-rich parents battle to have the most impressive Sweet 16 birthday party. The program is a study in attention-grabbing self-staging. The utterly spoilt, but also very self-assured teenagers have a convincing professional approach to arranging the ultimate birthday party. The venue, decoration, entertainment, guests, personal outfit, arrival scenario, date and personal performance during the party are all developed and selected based on the ability to impress the guests and hence create maximum attention and affirmation about the person's identity and creative effort. Several days are spent begging the parents for a birthday present, not just an ordinary luxury car, but one that has

a limited release, the purpose being, of course, to surprise the pampered and fussy audience. The question is, should the birthday child arrive in a combat helicopter or in a white Hummer limousine with a body-painted female driver that matches the recurring white theme of the party? An arrival never seen before! Each segment of this TV show outdoes the previous one, both in terms of budgets (some of these birthday parties have cost 300,000 US dollars) and in terms of the youngsters' self-staging. And as an added bonus the participants often experience a brief moment of celebrity status after the programs have been sent.

"My Super Sweet 16" has been a tremendously successful series and has been sold to several other countries and is also being marketed as a franchise concept. The program has met with strong criticism for endorsing superficial values like materialism, looks, and popularity as well as the excessive consumption among very young people. The program is also being criticized for promoting the unacceptable, pampered behavior of young, spoilt teenagers. I have to admit that I am also repelled by what tends to be economic exploitation as well as the participants' and the parents' lack of desire and ability to receive/give what they deserve.

But "MSS 26" conveys the clear message that lack of attention is the anticlimax of self-staging in the surplus society. The symbolic significance and many activities of your brand have to provide you, the consumer, with the necessary "air time" and attention from your surroundings.

Think of the car you just bought. Maybe a super smart, brand-new Citroen C5. At the time you bought it, it felt like a milestone in your financial capacity. The trip back from the dealer felt like a public parade, but no one noticed your new car. Why? Are your neighbors or colleagues envious? Or is the brand and the product just too ordinary to stage you as anyone different? How much attention to your identity could you have bought if you had chosen a different product?

Or how about those who still pay a king's ransom for the latest B&O television, and are under the misguided notion that it will give them the maximum "street cred" in their suburban neighborhood. The new neighbors drop in and seem excited, but, in fact, they think you are clamoring for attention about your financial capability in a far too clumsy and inappropriate manner.

The professional consumer

The consumer who primarily selects brands according to the ability of the brand to make a major contribution to his or her active self-staging is often called irrational. But clearly that's not the case.

The self-assured consumer has become a professional researcher who pursues symbols that can be used in his self-staging.

The professional consumer is up-to-date on everything that's going on and is in close contact with the Zeitgeist and all its facets, what is cool, hip and the latest of the

transient trends. What's the mentality and the mood in the various segments of society? What's right and what's wrong on the social and political agenda? What's on its way up and what's on its way down? The professional consumer studies cities, side streets, fashionable parts of the city, the underground, blogs, websites, magazines and micro-magazines (or micro-zines). He consults distinguished experts and trend setters. He investigates cool and uncool consumers, all with the specific purpose of getting a handle on the turbulent waves of change in society and the context in which his self-staging is going to be accomplished. He also wants to identify the brands that will make a positive contribution to his attention-grabbing self-staging.

The professional consumer is constantly on the lookout for a large pool of relevant brands. He examines them actively and intuitively to assess their substance, credibility, the clear conscience behind their symbolic value, and last, but not least, their performance in real time. Brands that know how to surf on the spirit of the time in the same way as the consumer are obviously relevant for the self-staging consumer. Brands that can reinvent and stage themselves as convincingly as the consumers themselves are obviously seen as the most suitable for helping consumers in their self-staging.

The professional consumer has developed an efficient shopping GPS, which speedily and precisely guides him to the shopping centers, stores and websites that can deliver the top brands with the correct symbolic significance. The GPS is constantly updated and never loses the satellite connection. And in addition to the consumer's professionalism an actual and physical version of the shopping GPS is now being developed and marketed.

In 2009, at one of the well-known TED conferences, the leader of the MIT Media Lab, Pattie Maes demonstrated a relatively simple device that the consumer can wear around the neck when he moves around the surplus society. The Gyro Gearloose device reinforces our physical surrounding by constantly supplying relevant data about the things we are looking at. All individuals and physical items around the carrier of the little device are transformed into data points, or hyperlinks which are connected to the relevant data from the web and projected through the lens of the device's inbuilt camera on to the relevant surface. By pointing the device at a book in the bookstore you can read Amazon.com's placement of the book on the best-seller list directly on the cover, or display the latest New York Times reviews on the palm of your hand. This simple device provides us, the consumers, with a sixth sense and with all relevant information to help us make the right decisions when we are in the middle of a purchase.

The empowered consumer

The Internet is the most important tool for the professional consumer in his pursuit of symbols that can be used in his all-absorbing self-staging.

On the Internet, with one or two simple searches, the consumer can find and select among a wide variety of brands without considering anyone but himself. The dis-

grunted consumer can tell “the truth” about a brand on the Internet’s social media, and his opinion can spread to millions in a short period of time, whereas previously it would only be related to 10 friends and potential customers of the respective brand. In similar fashion, the news about a new, unique and exceptionally exciting brand can spread like wildfire.

The greatly expanded use of the Internet also means that the potential for establishing a business and introducing new brands and products has become much simpler and less expensive. The result is that the offerings of brands and products as well as communication are steadily increasing and amplify the surplus.

The combination of surplus and the transparency on the Internet has empowered the consumer and has created the consumer-dominated society.

In this consumer-dominated society a simple, but stern logic rules, where the consumer decides when, why and how a brand will succeed or fail. Companies can no longer hide inconvenient truths about the brand or its lack of substance and subpar performance. Fake brands and incompetence are exposed and are punished publicly and severely through the viral effect of the Internet.

It’s no longer the brand that sells, but the consumer who buys – “don’t call me, maybe I’ll call you” is the clear message to your brand.

During B&O’s lengthy blunder, well-established, high-profiled audio brands like Bowers & Wilkins introduced products like Zeppelin, which had both the right innovative look and feel and was compatible with the ubiquitous Apple products. New brands, including the Danish Libratone caught the consumer’s and Apple’s attention with a wireless and Apple-compatible speaker. In an amazingly short time, Libratone sped past B&O, both in terms of price, design, function, and not least sale, and landed comfortably in media all over the world, in Apple’s stores and web shop, and in the modern consumer’s living-room. B&O was snoozing... And while B&O’s pulse, speed and market empathy were at zero, the consumer moved at lightning speed, demonstrating his power and finding new audio darlings.

The disloyal consumer

The self-absorbed consumer discovered his newly acquired power, his potential, and his exciting future a long time ago, and he has embarked on a very active self-staging mission based on the principle that he who drives also decides the route.

The professional consumer is wearing the pants and is henpecking your brand. The empowered consumer conducts a “no negotiation policy,” and ruthlessly grades your brand based on its ability to deliver the best advantages and the strongest value to the all-absorbing self-staging, at the exact date and time required. If your brand fails to live up to these demands the modern consumer will resume his pursuit of new and better-performing brands.

The innovative American business man, Reed Hastings, started Blockbuster killer, Netflix in 1997. Netflix was a targeted attempt to paralyze one of the world's most recognized brands, Blockbuster, which, with 6,000 stores all over the world, was the absolute market leader in video rentals at the time.

From day one Netflix outperformed Blockbuster by offering video rentals on the Internet. Hastings had quite simply created a discernible advantage for the consumer; find the movie you want to see and have it delivered right to your door step. That immediately attracted the consumer's attention and interest. Netflix's product development is superbly well designed enabling the company to retain the professional and disloyal consumer. Netflix constantly sets the agenda and the pace in the video-rental industry, and hence keeps attracting the attention of the media and consumers. For example in 1999, the company launched a subscription scheme. In 2000 a rating system was introduced where customers had the option of recommending movies to friends and family via its website. In 2007 came streaming of TV shows and movies directly to consumer's computer, in 2008 streaming to Xbox and Apple computers, and in 2009 streaming to PS3 and internet-linked TVs. Finally in 2010, Netflix introduced streaming of movies to Apple's iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch, Nintendo Wii, and several internet-based devices.

In the first half of 2011, Netflix had roughly 24.6 million subscribers, and Blockbuster had been brought to its knees and resold. It looked like a real success story about Netflix's deep understanding of the consumer's needs.

But then something happened which clearly shows that Netflix had totally underestimated the power of the modern consumer. For some time, Netflix's business model had been in trouble; the demand for streaming of movies was not growing at the expected rate, but on the other hand, there was still a surprisingly high demand for renting old-school DVDs. Primarily due to mailing costs, this is an expensive service to offer consumers. Therefore Netflix saw no other way out than to change the subscription terms and raise rental fees substantially – by almost 60 %. This maneuver by Netflix started an avalanche; its customers did not like this initiative one bit, to put it mildly. Within a matter of hours and days, a popular movement of anger and resentment against Netflix was raging. In social online media and blogs the world over tens of thousands of furious consumers expressed their indignation on tweets and blog posts. And the consumers' anger was transformed into immediate action. In one quarter, Netflix lost 800,000 subscribers, and virtually overnight, the Netflix stock fell by 25 %.

Who said the consumer is disloyal?

Since the introduction of iTunes I have been one of the company's most loyal and best-paying customers and fans. iTunes has followed me wherever I went – at work, at home and when traveling, first on the iPod, then on the iPhone and iPad. Initially I was linked to various iPod docking stations; later, via streaming to the Libratone speaker, I have always managed to have a carefully selected sound tapestry to satisfy my own massive consumption of music and cover any professional and social

gathering. Thanks to iTunes I have played the role of discrete, self-taught DJ – and even managed to assume the role as the life of the party. I have spent large sums of money and thousands of hours on iTunes, and I have had uncritical admiration, gratitude, and first and foremost extreme loyalty to the brand. Without comparison, iTunes has been my best brand offer in the category of online music purchase. If you had asked me a few months ago, I could not have imagined what could snatch me from iTunes' firm grasp on me and my passion for music. But then Spotify landed on the Danish market, and it changed my music consumption habits overnight. I had certainly read about the Swedish music streaming phenomenon, but I did not think it was worth a second look, for I had iTunes, which totally satisfied my musical desires. When Spotify became accessible in Denmark my curiosity and the wish to see for myself – being musically fairly far advanced – told me to download Spotify, if for no other reason so that I could tear it to pieces. But that's not what happened. I was caught and I converted. Not only did Spotify offer me the option of streaming endless amounts of music to my computer for free. For a mere 20 US dollars a month I could also buy a subscription enabling me to listen to Spotify on my faithful companion, the iPhone, and avoid the annoying ads, which, after all, are Spotify's bread and butter. Spotify also has the brilliant in-built feature that it allows me to access the play lists of my iTunes through the Spotify player – hence Spotify has done everything in its power to eliminate iTunes. Finally, Spotify has made it much easier for me to share my musical discoveries and play lists with my musical acquaintances. Spotify has, better than most, caught the self-staging consumer trend. Currently, Spotify is THE scene for all music lovers with the urge to post, share, and show off their music. Spotify has never shut down, neither on my computer nor on my iPhone, since the day I downloaded it. I still have a soft spot for iTunes – and now and then I listen and buy on iTunes, but to be honest, only if they happen to offer a piece of music that is not yet available on Spotify. Deep down I am shocked at my own disloyalty – the same must be the case with iTunes. Apple is totally unaccustomed to cutthroat competition. If they want to have even a fighting chance to keep pace with Spotify, they have to give both the iTunes product and the declining value of the brand a serious look.

The brands that have not yet realized and grasped the new market order and logic, and who have not made an effort to come to know the professional, powerful and highly disloyal consumer will be facing a difficult time.

The fast-moving consumer

The self-staging consumer is under severe pressure in the turbulent society, which every day brandishes the whip with lengthy currents and passing trends. The consumer who wants to realize himself and build a competitive identity is forced to keep up with the latest developments and stage himself in unexpected and attention-grabbing ways.

Like hard-hitting waves of change the real world moves, and the professional consumer has learnt to surf on top of the waves.

The professional consumers of today and tomorrow are mobile, agile and superbly trained in moving in a targeted and speedy manner towards activities and brands that deliver the greatest value in form of the most powerful self-staging. The disloyal consumers won't hesitate a second to move from one activity to another and exchange your brand with another one, provided it can capture the attention and secure affirmation of their desired *self*.

Only the brands that are able to keep pace with the consumers and are confident surfing synchronically with them on the turbulent waves of change in the surplus society have a fighting chance to make a difference with the disloyal consumers. Quite frankly, the *self*-absorbed consumer has no respect for your brand's glorious past. He is utterly shameless. He is in every way, shape and form a son-of-a-rich.

CHAPTER

2 **Brand surfing** >> The most important management discipline of the future





“Never change a winning brand” is an obvious logic that many business leaders follow, and that’s no surprise, since previously, 15 years ago, this thinking made good sense. But that was in the former millennium.

But let’s just for a moment try and see what I mean when I use the word ‘brand’. What I refer to as a brand is the value the consumer consciously attaches to a product, a service or some form of unit. We are talking about much more than the mere functional reputation of a product; but that as well. What I mean when I use the term ‘brand’ includes the experience and the power of the identity-creating effect which the use of the product or the service engenders in the individual who values and purchases it. The strength of the brand is thus the experience of the compatibility of the product, you could say, i.e. as a prop for the story which the self-absorbed consumers use in their professional staging of their own story.

Once you understand the brand as a product of the human consciousness, realize the importance of the brand’s value for the company’s earning and survival capacity, and also appreciate how fragile the brand value is set against the powerful, disloyal and fast-moving consumers, then you’ll understand my concern when a well-known CEO whispers in my ear that he’ll “never try to change a profitable brand.” He just let me know that he doesn’t understand his customers, the spirit of the time, or the prevailing conditions for doing business in 2012.

You may very well think: My company is not very old, our product category is still expanding, our business model is working, the life cycle of the brand is far from declining, and our competitiveness still seems strong. You may even feel that business is mainly a matter of operating production, organization, marketing, sales, and distribution as effectively and as profitably as possibly.

If that is the case, your company is only capitalizing on the value of the brand. That may feel good and healthy and be seen as long lasting. Why should such a brand and such a company still focus on change and development of the brand? Why change the assignment from being a repetition of the successful solutions of the past to being a demanding, progressive development of the brand? Why change the job from something that can be effectively “developed,” planned, directed, executed and controlled to something where the brand is repeatedly forced to make decisions and change? Why make things difficult for oneself when it appears to be so easy?

The reason is that the current value and attractiveness of the brand and hence the company’s earnings always are the accumulated result of past development efforts – compared to the strength of the competing brands, of course. When management underestimates the connection between capitalization and development and takes the brand value for granted, then obviously brand development comes to a standstill, and that seriously jeopardizes the attraction and earning potential of the future brand. The company drives the brand and uses all its resources on repeating itself as streamlined and as synchronized as possible, so that consumers can have exactly the same thing, presented in the same way as before, and as cost-effectively as possible, of course, with the clear objective of showing a profit for the company on the short-term quarterly balance sheet.

Unfortunately, if that’s the way the company thinks, the post party will turn out to be a real big flop. The downside of the cost-effective repetitions of the brand is that the consumers will perceive your brand as predictable, unexciting and stagnant, which cannot keep pace with all the new and crisper brands that are flooding the market. When management is only focused on optimal capitalization of the development efforts of the past the disloyal consumers will react swiftly and mercilessly hitting the company’s top and bottom line in record time; maybe not in the next quarter, but most probably as early as the following fiscal year. Your current success – your booming sales and financial figures – are a result of yesterday’s brand value development. The future success (and survival) of your company depends on the brand value that is being developed today.

The hard-hitting decline that your brand and your company may face in a month, a year or even later could be caused by the fact that you failed to understand why, when you seemed to be successful and on top of things financially, you need to spend time and money on developing your brand even further. Why should you do that, when you can spend all your energy on reaping the financial benefits of yesterday’s development efforts?

But ignoring the development of new brand value in your company’s fundamental approach to doing business and only focusing on capitalization of existing value can be fatal.

This insight is neither new nor sensational. What is startling is the realization that the consumers’ preferences, generated by the spirit of the time, are changing much more

rapidly than before. Long-lasting product loyalty has been replaced by consumers' disloyalty and flirting with their own identity and need for self-actualization in sync with the turbulent waves of change in society.

Risky brand business

The self-staging, attention-seeking, professional, powerful and disloyal consumers have taught themselves to surf on the spirit of the time, and they choose brands based on what mood they are in. Consumers choose the brand with the biggest advantages and highest value irrespective of former brand relationships. Quality and functionality are taken for granted within the various price segments of the product category. Consumers make their choice primarily based on the ability of the brand to stage the consumer through its symbolic significance. In other words, it's the brand that suits the consumer's desired identity best that is chosen in the transparent and turbulent user-dominated surplus society.

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The most self-absorbed consumers' behavior is risky business for brands that have come to a standstill believing that they can take their consumer advantages and consumer value for granted and that they will be theirs forever.

New long-lasting currents in society, new technology, a changed user mentality, transient trends, and backlashes against these trends arrive at the market with increasing frequency. New brands that constantly challenge existing brands are launched at a more rapid pace. The professional consumers are watching the slightest ripples on the water and are ready to jump on the wave of new, crisp brands that can provide optimal self-staging.

The value and attractiveness of your brand simply diminishes day by day, unless you learn to surf more proficiently, faster, and more independently than your competitors on society's rapidly breaking waves of change.

But it's not just a matter of seeing an annoying repositioning of your brand within its product category from number 1, to number 2, to number 3. If you don't learn to surf synchronically on the spirit of the time, in tandem with the consumer, these powerful consumers can bury your stagnant brand – and hence the entire basis of your existence – in record time, in this transparent and user-controlled surplus society. If you insist on clinging to the glorious past image of yourself, the basic identity of your brand risks being outdated, irrelevant, ignored, berated, and rejected.

The list of forgotten or failed brands that believed it was a matter of repeating themselves and doing the same as always goes on and on:

Fila: From cool to totally uncool. Actually rated as one of the most uncool sports brands these days by fashion blogs the world over.

Reebok: Has been hibernating since the Jane Fonda wave. From cool life style brand to ordinary sports brand.

Opel: From one of the tough Germans to totally outmoded. Unsexy and uncool. Is trying to reignite its image by a trivial launch of a “green” car, but “nobody looks at Opel now.”

Hummer: The world’s premier gas guzzler is a poor fit for the environmentally conscious consumer.

Blockbuster: Has failed to transform an otherwise strong brand within the movie rental industry on to new vital platforms such as satellite TV and the Internet.

Saab: The car in the middle of nowhere. An exclusive car in terms of price, but not positioned as a typical class of luxury cars. Not a Volkswagen, not a Porsche or anything in between. The company went bankrupt in 2011, and today the Saab museum in Trollhättan stands as a living testimony to a branch of automobile that never learnt what the symbolic value of a brand means.

Sony Ericsson and Nokia: “Sleeping brothers in arms.” Within a period of a few years, both Nokia and Sony Ericsson have gone from being market leaders to being overtaken from behind by a string of competitors, who early on spotted the smart phone trend that had taken over the consumers’ consciousness and wallets. Apple, Blackberry, Samsung and HTC have taken a serious bite out of SE’s and Nokia’s market shares the last couple of years.

(If you need more examples of brands that have capsized because they thought that the road to retaining and expanding their brand value went through replicating themselves and their competitors, check our blog on hotelcreativity.com)

Brands that blindly trust the solutions of the past – whether it’s their own or others’ product concepts, personalities, marketing campaigns, distribution solutions or presence in the social media for that matter – will quickly lose their business advantage and value when faced with the self-staging, professional, and attention-seeking consumers.

The brand value and attractiveness of your company is certainly not static or long-lasting in the turbulent and transparent, user-dominated surplus society; on the contrary. Your brands have become perishable goods that may rot in a short amount of time, and the disloyal consumers immediately take the negative consequences of a brand’s design crisis. They choose one of the new, fresh and inviting brands over one of yours.

Pandora’s Box

Over the last few years, the jewelry brand Pandora has had a tremendous success, not only in Denmark but also in 55 other markets. In just three years it managed to triple its sales and was quoted on the stock exchange. Right after its IPO the share was the sweetheart of the media, and the company was carried shoulder high, metaphorically speaking. The excitement was endless. But in August 2011, Pandora had to restate its expected earnings from 30 % to 0 % growth due to its waning sales figures, and that led to a virtual blood bath on the equity market and in the media. Overnight,

Pandora dropped from its pedestal and has since been subject to much criticism. The top executive was fired and no immediate replacement has been found. Its inventory of jewelry is excessive and so on and so forth.

Pandora reminds me of the story of Pandora's Box, where evil and disease streamed out of the box once it was opened. The reason is not so much the bad-mouthing of the brand in the press. The reason is that Pandora leaves some deep tracks behind, in my opinion, as an example of a company that took its brand value and attractiveness for granted and focused all its energy on a global expansion and capitalization of its existing value. But the company had to prop up its image ahead of the IPO and subsequently satisfy the shareholders' need to see top earnings performance.

Without comparison, the most serious challenge Pandora faces is that almost 80 % of its sales come from the popular charms and charm bracelet – a type of do-it-yourself bracelet. The company has no immediate replacement for the charm bracelet. The concept of a do-it-yourself bracelet is neither new nor unique in any way, and today there are several competitors in this product category.

Not only is Pandora's brand value being eroded since the "build-a-something" craze has already started to fade, while new offers in this product category are constantly being launched. Even more importantly, Pandora's brand value and attractiveness suffer from the fact that the company has never made a serious effort to build a strong symbolic value into its brand, let alone tried to retain or expand the limited symbolic value it used to have.

Is it possible to imagine that Pandora is becoming the symbol of a fad of the past consisting of simple and systematic individualization of custom jewelry through ordinary precious stones? Is it possible that Pandora is now associated with fake, shallow and impersonal jewelry in the consciousness of the self-staging consumers? I believe so. When, reluctantly, I walk around the shopping centers and jewelry stores outside the metro area it looks to me as if Pandora's shop-in-shops are pretty empty. But it's this damn recession, right?

Watch out. Breaking waves. Sorry, Pandora. Too late.

Simple repetitions are a thing of the past

Quite frankly, your brand won't be able to retain its value and hence the basis for profitable market capitalization if, self-righteously, you keep rehashing the behavior of the past and the fundamental identity of the brand, irrespective of how well things are going right now.

The approach of repeating a brand's identity again and again is driven by fear of being unrecognizable and the fear of failing when doing something new. But, as mentioned earlier, simply doing what you have always done will make your brand predictable, invisible and trivial in the over-communicated surplus society.

Obviously, a predictable brand that is unable to stage itself in an attention-grabbing manner cannot be expected to help the self-absorbed consumer in his demanding self-staging.

As mentioned in the Prologue, B&O has faced many challenges over the last decade, but the company's failure to rapidly develop relevant and innovative products rather than repeating itself in a steady flow of unimpressive product improvements has been at the center of its problems. A reactionary belt-and-suspenders design culture at B&O has made development processes heavy, expensive, and far too lengthy. For that reason B&O has missed opportunities several times and lost important market shares to faster moving competitors – and consumers. It's hard to gauge whether fear, arrogance, lack of market savviness or just a looong production time is the reason why B&O waited almost ten years after the launch of the iPod to introduce an audio product that is compatible with the world's best-selling music player. And why was B&O's first flat-screen TV introduced so long after the competitors'?

Looking at the majority of products launched from the factory in the Danish town of Struer during that period, innovative leaps and new brand value are few and far between. Simple repetitions and improvements seem to be the overarching design philosophy at B&O. The flat screen became slightly thinner, or a little bigger, and the audio products were redesigned (within the very recognizable B&O design, of course), with a slightly improved sound system. But there were no surprises, no "must-have" products, no deeply felt 'wow' experiences; for an entire decade.

Furthermore, in a market characterized by financial crisis and price-conscious consumers B&O's pricing policies seem to be out of step with the times. For a number of years, prices of B&O products seem to be constantly rising. In 2009, for example, the company introduced BeoVision 4, a 103-inch plasma TV costing the tidy sum of almost 150,000 US dollars – hardly a product and a price setting that helped cultivate a new, younger target group and dispel the notion of B&O as one of the status symbols of the past.

Apparently B&O also had a somewhat distorted view of the modern consumer's criteria for choosing products. At every product launch they pompously and proudly declared that here is the next B&O classic. Not only do the young, self-centered and disloyal consumer find the term "classic" to be a totally irrelevant argument for buying a new product (except, of course, in the case of a genuine classic with many years of business recognition behind it). In fact, the word 'classic' may be the world's biggest "turn-off." Besides, it seems rather self-promoting and arrogant to constantly launch classics – an appearance and a promotion strategy that is ill-suited for the professional consumer who specializes in story-telling. There is no doubt that many people started to turn away from B&O in those years. That was especially the case when Apple broke through the sound barrier in the music and audio industry introducing a series of pioneering products that were state-of-the art both in terms of technology and design. The German brand Loewe also managed to ride the alternative design wave with a strikingly different design concept, choice of materials, and functionality compared to B&O's aluminum, steel and glass. There isn't a shadow of doubt that

the reason why Apple and Loewe snatched large market shares from B&O is the two companies' giant technological strides as well as the new innovative white design universe.

B&O's clear tendency to pompously draw attention to itself in the market by simple repetitions and minimal product innovations has contributed to the revered Danish brand losing much of its symbolic value and the respect of consumers, irrespective of several nominations to global lists of cool brands. The value of the B&O brand and in particular its ability to attract new young consumers has plummeted for quite a number of years, with the result that the company has lost one third of its business and also failed to conquer an obvious share of the gigantic digital market.

In 2011 B&O appointed a new CEO (again). At first glance that seems to be a turning point for the company. The young "wonder boy" Tue Mantoni came from the illustrious British motorcycle brand Triumph. As its CEO he had helped the struggling company through a successful revitalization. Since joining B&O, Tue Mantoni has introduced a number of initiatives which give reason for optimism on behalf of the company.

One of the first assignments Tue Mantoni has given himself is implementing a radical change in the company's self-image and culture. He has described the company culture as self-glorifying with the misguided perception of being a leader in the industry with customers waiting breathlessly for the launch of the next B&O product. The improved and shorter response time should also lead to a risk-taking business culture where all levels of the organization dare make decisions at a much faster pace. Mantoni has also appealed for far greater openness and closer relationships with collaborators in all segments of the organization, from design and development to production and sales. Changing focus and looking around is always a good thing.

In January of 2012 B&O launched its new product line B&O Play, which consists of relatively inexpensive stand-alone products all compatible with smart phones music players and tablets. B&O Play products will be sold in Apple stores and in B&O's own stores and webshop. The obvious goal is to increase sales and attract a broader and in particular younger target group. As part of the B&O Play series the company has introduced a new, innovative product, Beolit 12, which is a portable, Apple-compatible sound system. It's appealing at first glance. The design concept is different; the design is more organic and feminine with e.g. a functional belt made of genuine leather. New materials, new technology, new price, new (external) designer, new product line, new sales channels, new openness.

Has the era of simple repetitions at B&O finally come to an end? I sincerely hope so. I get really mad when one of my favorite brands is at a standstill. About 15 years ago, during a break-in, my gigantic B&O column speakers were stolen, and the brand has not made it inside my door or my identity since. Now the time has come to once again combine my active self-staging with a touch of national pride.

I have already started looking forward to the time when B&O takes its next big step forward, exits the slipstream of the past, and regains the necessary amount of cour-

age and independence to give the Apple brand a run for its money with surprisingly new and convincing designs, features and brand performance. I look forward to B&O living up to its legacy and release its full potential of symbolic value. I envisage B&O taking the position as the European design aristocrat dressed in baggy pants and cool sneakers, a proud and authentic brand, which through openness, youthfulness, creativity and drive positions itself as an intelligent, aesthetic alternative to Apple.

Now may be the time when Mr. Mantoni is going to expand B&O's brand value and create a renewed strong global attractiveness. Here is an obvious chance to capitalize on the brand value, by introducing a broader range of relevant and sexy products that target a much wider audience than the original B&O brand. But the figures on the bottom line won't change for some time. Therefore it's now, before the new and (perhaps) far more attractive B&O brand appears on the balance sheet that you should buy shares in the company.

In 2008, Howard Schultz, the CEO of the global chain of coffee shops, Starbucks, stepped forward and admitted to employees and stockholders that Starbucks has lost its edge. Subsequently, he initiated a turnaround process resulting in the closure of almost 1,000 unprofitable Starbucks cafes. In total, more than 18,000 Starbucks employees lost their jobs in connection with the turnaround process. The slimming down of Starbucks quickly showed results for the distressed brand. Earnings are up, and the Starbucks share has risen over the last few years – from \$7 at the end of 2008 to close to \$50 in early 2012. In spite of the business turnaround my experience of the brand is almost unchanged since 2008 – or 1998 for that matter.

For me, Starbucks is yet another example of a large company (one of my favorite brands) that seems to have lost momentum by repeating itself – or perhaps even come to a standstill. The media also claim that the 40-year-old chain is in a midlife crisis. As far back as I can remember the chain has clung, almost desperately, to its fundamental concept. The interior design is still cozy, but has gradually become pretty old-school and far from inspiring and in-tune with the times. There is hardly any product development to speak of. It's the same coffee (it still tastes great, though), the same dry crackers, the same juice, the same cake. Ok, ok, Starbucks has introduced some expected minor adjustments of the brand and the concept, e.g. free Wi-Fi in their coffee shops in the US, CSR campaigns, loyalty campaigns, introduction of new coffee products along the way, all under the heading of simple repetitions

Fortunately for Starbucks, the large number of newly conceptualized coffee shops that have flooded the market the last 10-15 years have been unable to punish the company's uninspiring repetitions. The new brands have just followed in Starbucks' by now rather worn-out footsteps. But watch out. I wouldn't be surprised if a new player appears on the scene who will astound us with a new relaxed meeting place that is slightly more in-tune with the spirit of the time – compared to coffee shops whose primary model was the almost 20-year-old location for the TV show "Friends." Or perhaps Starbucks is finally going to "wake up and smell the coffee." In 2011, in connection with its 40th anniversary, Starbucks launched a redesigned logo, in which

the signature “Starbucks Coffee” is left out, indicating that the company is opening up new business areas.

Starbucks’ acquisition of the successful American juice bar chain Evolution Fresh apparently means that its first juice bars will open in the US in mid-2012. But even more surprising and remarkable, in late 2010 Starbucks piloted a new concept in a few of its American coffee shops. The new model features a substantially expanded menu and drink selection as well as opening hours. The café offers several hot snacks and serves beer and wine after 4 pm. The interior décor has also been greatly updated from the traditional Starbucks concept. The bar is located in the center of the café, thus staging it as the focal point of the café experience and sending a distinctly different signal. The transformation – from Starbucks by day to “Barbucks” at night – is underscored by a more formal staff dress code. Perhaps these are indications of more than simple repetitions from Starbucks.

The consumer brain’s dopamine

Now is the time to end the simple repetitions, in all aspects of the brand. That is, if you want your company to survive for longer than the short term.

Simple repetitions must be replaced by constant innovations and surprises. When, on one hand, we consumers clearly recognize one of our preferred brands (I mean not only visually but also their fundamental identity and characteristics), and on the other hand are positively surprised, then our original excitement for the brand will be confirmed and strengthened.

In other words, what we seek are both recognition and innovation. This will affirm ourselves and also affirm the ability of the brand to develop and remain an appropriate symbol in our active self-staging. A successful experience includes both continuity and innovation.

The ability of the brand to ensure recognition and simultaneously create surprises is the dopamine of the consumer brain releasing a strong motivation to study, promote, and possibly reward the brand through purchase, use, appreciation and recommendations.

Adidas – and Adidas Originals, in particular – retains and innovates its classic and cool brand identity in a steady flow. The brand manages to sprinkle a touch of a new, crisp design universe over its styles and its brand, without losing its grip on its authentic story. From classic track suits with the famous stripes to sneakers, which may have a classic cut, but are constantly redesigned in new colors, materials and with additional features. This is the type of combined recognition and surprise which retain the consumers’ curiosity and attraction to the brand. Adidas has learnt how to link relevant and crisp celebrities to the brand, who either appear in regular ads for the company or as voluntary, enthusiastic and completely credible endorsers and fans. Since Run DMC appeared as the world’s coolest Adidas endorser in 1986, artists and celebrities like Estelle, Kate Perry, Missy Elliot, Kylie Minogue, Jay-Z and Snoop Dog have confidently appeared in Adidas ads. On the design side Adidas has created

extraordinary attention around itself by introducing surprising and innovative fashion collections by upbeat fashion designers like Stella McCartney, Yohji Yamamoto and Jeremy Scott.

In 2011 Adidas launched its largest global marketing campaign to date including ads on TV and in movie theaters and viral films on the Internet. "Adidas All In" is the title of the campaign. Both Kate Perry and the rapper B.o.B. appear in the movie including, of course, all the right sports stars, both the streamlined world-wide celebs like Beckham and Messi (recognition), to the underground stars and skaters like Silas Baxter-Neal and Lem Villemin (surprise). In addition, the super-hip French electronic music duo Justice delivers the attractive sound track to the Adidas-All-In universe. The All-In movies unite the Adidas brand universe and the passion around it and create precisely the distinct and relevant, but also recognizable and surprising, image of the time which captures me, as consumer. Everything has been measured out in perfect doses. Adidas is not only about rapid pulse and winner mentality within the world of sport; Adidas is also about lifestyle, passion and creativity.

If your brand is to retain or expand its value and attractiveness to the disloyal and fast-moving consumers, like Adidas, it has to deliver a convincing element of recognition, as well as valuable surprises at the same rapid pace at which the consumers themselves and the turbulent waves of society move.

Branding on 1st class

In the future it is vital that you, the business leaders, keep a strong focus on making the company's brands recognizable, but also constantly surprise the consumers. Otherwise the brand fails to elicit the necessary excitement with the professional, self-staging consumers who are only interested in brands that perform and impress optimally every single time they meet them. If you stick to simple and predictable repetitions of the brand identity the consumers will ignore and lose respect for your brand. If you don't dare or don't have the ability to create recognition and surprise in all elements and at all the touch points of the company brands its value and attractiveness will be reduced. You are wasting the earning potential of the brand, which will break the business model.

The time has come to take branding more seriously. The time has come to upgrade branding from "monkey" class to absolute first class in the company's top management. As top leader you have to reformat the branding concept. You have to get rid of the last remnant of the incomplete understanding and approach of the past where branding was something that was 'nice to have', but not 'need to have'. Branding is not about an attractive writing on an attractive piece of paper. The word for branding in English is not marketing. Branding is not an annual game of naïve market visions that will never be implemented (but the strategy game was great fun, and we have to play such a game in between the predictable repetitions of the brand identity). If working intensively with the development of the brand is just something you contract out to the make-up and entertainment departments of the ad agencies while you

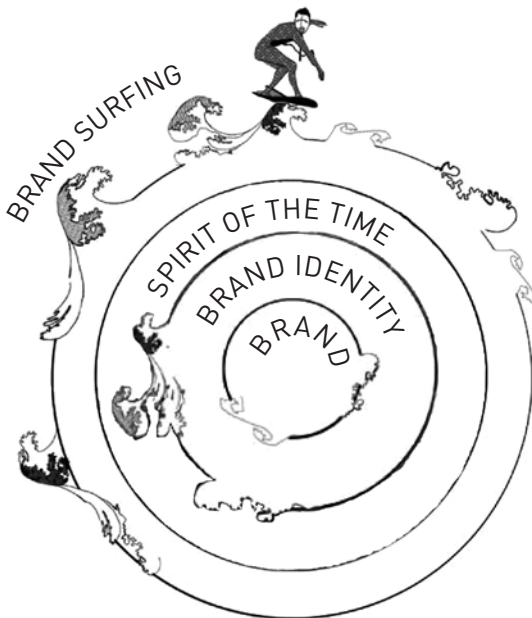
keep cracking numbers and solving problems in the production segment, then you have shirked your responsibility and removed yourself from the task that is of the most vital for the future of your company.

Branding on first class is about doing *whatever it takes* to ensure that the brand remains valuable, differentiated, and attention-grabbing with clear competitive advantages, a strong attractiveness, and a large potential for creating business and making business profitable. In the turbulent and transparent surplus society populated by self-staging, professional, disloyal and fast-surfing consumers branding is and will continue to be the most important leadership discipline of the future – your company’s road to oxygen, water, food, safety, love, recognition, and fulfillment of its full potential, both in terms of value and of profit.

Toss the brand on to the turbulent waves of society

If your brand is to succeed in retaining or expanding its value and hence be able to attract the professional and disloyal consumers, you have to toss it on to the fast-breaking waves of society.

It’s time for brand surfing – branding on first class – the direct route to the future top and bottom line.



Brand surfing = *integrated, symphonic, attractive, differentiated, attention-grabbing and valuable recreation and activation of the brand identity in the spirit of the time.*

Brand surfing means recreating or activating the fundamental identity of the brand, taking society’s turbulent waves of change into consideration, the purpose being that consumers should both recognize the brand and be impressively surprised at its performance.

The recreation or activation of the brand identity must ensure that the brand appears as valuable, differentiated and attention-grabbing, integrated as well as responsible, an attractive symbol in the professional consumers' all-engrossing self-staging. The same considerations apply, as those that pertain to the consumers, when it comes to deciding whether the company should focus on recreating the brand's basic identity or activate the existing brand identity within the spirit of the time.

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The many examples of brands that have lost their attractiveness, relevance and hence the foundation of the company's market capitalization more or less overnight due to the introduction of new brands with new and more valuable facets, send a clear message. Your company should not only concentrate on the activation of the brand but also on the fundamental value you are trying to activate in relation to the consumers. This is an ongoing process. In other words, you must have a constant edge when surfing society's turbulent waves and make a decision of whether the fundamental identity of the brand is and can remain relevant and attractive. Most likely, you need to recreate the brand identity from the ground up, so that it can offer new value and new advantages which will be able to retain the relevance and attractiveness for the professional and fast-moving consumers. The consumers won't automatically start perceiving your brand as being valuable, differentiated, relevant, dependable and acceptable as a symbol for their focused self-staging. The attractiveness of the brand and hence the pivotal point for your company can evaporate in a short amount of time, unless you have an offensive approach, reinforced on a daily basis, to the fundamental identity and value of the brand, and subsequently recreate or activate the brand's identity, as needed, according to the spirit of the time.

Deciding whether to recreate or activate the fundamental identity of the brand depends on how radical a change is needed in the pursuit of retaining or expanding the value of the brand.

Irrespective of whether the fundamental identity of the brand needs to be recreated or activated, all aspects of the company and of the brand identity need to be addressed and scrutinized, including underlying factors such as supplier contracts, logistics, production technologies as well as front-end activities like the visual identity, marketing and social media.

The story of the brand has to be massaged, updated or rewritten in light of society's turbulent waves of change and considering the development of the brand. The brand personality must be dynamic and tuned in to the currents of the time in an intelligent, tasteful, authentic and cool manner. The products, the packing, the service, the entire purchase experience have to be incorporated into the latest technology, the latest trends, and anything else that has an impact on the consumer experience. The marketing of the brand should not be viewed as mere communication, but as staging experiences and brand performances that entertain and impress the consumers. The accountability of the brand and its role in society must set a new agenda in our fragile world.

There is no alternative to constantly recreating or activating the brand within the spirit of the time; only that approach will ensure that the brand remains the most

suitable and valuable symbol for the self-staging consumer. Who would choose a monotonous, outdated and uncool brand as a symbolic extension of his identity in the pursuit of attention, respect and recognition in the identity-fixated society? Only a nobody.

Brand surfing – the approach to maximizing (and ensuring) the brand value and earning capacity of the company by recreating or activating the fundamental identity of the brand within the spirit of the time – can be divided into two basic activities for the company: “Spotting the Waves” and “Surfing the Waves.”

Spotting the Waves

Predicting the future in our turbulent surplus society is an impossible task. Technological advances, new consumer mentalities, and new trends come and go with an incredible pace. New value-added brands and products based on the latest developments are offered to the disloyal consumer who is ready to paddle out and surf the wave of change.

Just like a surfer has no way of knowing, with any certainty, where or when the next big wave that will give the perfect surf, will roll in, so your company can get no reliable report on which waves it should surf the company’s brands or when to start paddling towards the wave.

Any surfer knows that you cannot surf a wave that is too close. You have no time to read the wave, paddle, get up on the board, and perform a perfect surf. Although it’s hard, you have no choice but to gaze towards the horizon, see the ripples on the water, and learn to sense when the next “relevant” wave of change is approaching your company’s brand. You have to have time to recreate or activate the fundamental identity of the brand by introducing new products, services and other brand activities before competitors or entirely new players integrate valuable changes and surf all the attention and all the purchase dollars home from the consumers.

Your company has to adopt the same offensive approach to spotting society’s turbulent waves as the experienced surfer in spotting the next wave. Staying at home or waiting on the beach is no use. A brand surfer has to actively seek out the waves. It’s time-consuming and demands considerable resources to pursue and spot the right waves. But you and your company have no choice; you have to seek out the waves offensively and proactively. Time is needed to reflect on what strategy to take, and many resources are needed to pursue and spot the right waves, when you want your brand surfing to be profitable. You cannot adopt a wait-and-see attitude sitting in your sofa or at your company’s conservative mahogany desk.

Surfing the Waves

Brand surfing is not only about following the trends and give the brand a modest, trendy make-over. Brand surfing demands an empathic appreciation and individual interpretation of society’s turbulent waves, and an independent, creative and credible

integration of currents in the form of new, attention-grabbing and attractive products, services, and other brand activities.

The recreation and activation of the brand identity, within the spirit of the time, have to surprise and thus revitalize the brand in the consumers' mind, i.e. offer them something new that is considered valuable; the small or large "extra" that will also draw the necessary attention to the brand and differentiate it from the competition.

Once you have realized this, recreation and activation of the brand, within the spirit of the time, becomes a never-ending development task; an assignment that has to be completed with the same passion and immense speed with which the waves of society and the new brands move. That may demand an incredible amount of attention, but, with the consumer consciousness and consumer behavior in mind the alternative may be that your brand's value and sex appeal evaporates in a fraction of a second. That happens if the brand comes to a standstill and just repeats itself in the eyes of the consumer. But don't despair. Once you start surfing the waves it becomes both fun – and profitable, indeed.

Your brand – i.e. the consumers' perception of it – must move at least as fast as the currents of society. At the same time it has to have an edge over the aggressive competitors in order to be respected and appear valuable and attractive seen from the consumer's relative point of view. Reality moves at an accelerating pace, the consumers move with it, and there are lots of alternatives to your brand. Unless you and your brands move and keep pace with reality, reality will move away from you.

Take off your business suit, put on your wetsuit, and read the story about some of the most profitable brands coming up on the following pages.

Brand surfing pays off

Obviously, you don't attain and retain a reputation as a valuable brand for a long period of time. It's something you have to fight for every single day. The Swedish fashion giant Hennes & Mauritz has recognized this fully.

In 1947 Erling Persson started what we know today as H&M. Right up until the end of the 20th century, H&M was the epitome of best-practice with a declared corporate mission: "Fashion and quality at the best price."

H&M became world champions (they still are) in gathering trends from the catwalks of the larger international fashion brands and redistributing them to young girls and youthful women at affordable prices.

H&M's collections had (and have) a perfect timing and provide an optimal dose of the new fashion trends to a wide range of consumers. In other words, H&M delivers simple world-class performances within trend translation, hence the company enjoys a high degree of consumer gratitude, and their purchasing, based on value, is substantial and very profitable.

In the latter half of the 20th century, H&M expanded rapidly to most of the world (2,000 stores in 37 countries), with a clearly defined business concept, the hottest super models on the cities' billboards, and a steady stream of new, affordable fashion products for the masses as the key parameters.

Sales and earnings kept going up and up and kept rising in line with the international expansion. The Swedes were an enormous success on the international fashion scene.

In 1998 Mr. Persson handed over control of H&M to his son Stefan, and in 2009 the grandson, Karl-Johan Persson took over the reins as CEO.

Most heirs to gigantic business successes would no doubt make every effort possible to avoid losing what their predecessors had created, stick to business-as-usual, limit investments, and minimize changes in the company.

But Stefan, Karl-Johan and the entire H&M organization have, better than most, grasped the need for the brand to be activated at top speed, with new brand activities that give the consumers news aesthetic and emotional experiences and a valuable tool in their self-staging.

Since 2000, H&M has added several brands to its portfolio, both the two juicy new acquisitions Monki and Cheap Monday, and their own brand COS, which is a more mature and quality-focused brand. In addition, new product areas such as interior design have been added, as well as co-branding with Marimekko, Collett and Unicef. H&M has launched one attention-grabbing event after the other, e.g. a gigantic fashion show in New York's Central Park, and latest "Fashion Against Aids." Like no other company, H&M has been surfing on the celebrity wave. The company invented and used the super models of the 80s and, as one of the first in the business, used "non-model celebrities" like Madonna, Kylie Minogue, Jade Jagger, Paolo Maldini, Luis Garcia, Katie Perry, Pharell, Yoko Ono, Dita von Teese and Cindy Lauper.

Nevertheless, it's the exclusive H&M collections, designed by some of the most well-known international celebrity designers like Karl Lagerfeld, Stella McCartney, Madonna, Viktor & Rolf, Commes des Garçons, Roberto Cavalli, Fiorucci, Mathew Williamson, Sonia Rykiel, Lanvin, Versace, fashion blogger Elin Kling and recently Marni, that have had the biggest impact on the H&M brand over the last few years.

The designer collections, introduced in 2004, have given consumers something they did not have before delivering a value that competitors could not duplicate 1:1, in an industry where copying others "too closely" is hard for the company to agree to internally and impossible for the consumers to accept. The consumers have gained access to aesthetics that metaphorically seem to provide access to what used to be a "distant planet." They can now buy designer clothes that normally cost considerably more than what the bank accounts of ordinary people would allow; hence they are able to stage themselves as "expensive." In many ways, strangely enough, the exclusive H&M collections are almost a cooler and sexier symbol to wear than the

top designers' own and considerably more expensive collections. The highest level of fashion, aesthetics and muted use of the company logo at low and sustainable prices makes sense and delivers something new, unique, and valuable to the fashionable, but also socially-minded consumers.

After nine years of constant success and attention from the world press, the designer collections have become H&M's most obvious and strong recurrent brand surf, a constant activation of its brand in the spirit of the time. And the world's most distinguished designers have also caught on to the fact that H&M can help them along as well riding on an attractive, relevant wave towards the consumer. In certain cases, H&M may even become an eye opener and life saver for the most stuck-up static designer brands. In 2008 designer Donatella Versace said, "I work very hard to put the Versace line in the luxury section. I think to put the Versace line in H&M would confuse the brand." Three years later she started her first collaboration with H&M. Yet another huge success with massive interest from the media and consumers, and all merchandise being ripped from H&M stores. "I am thrilled to be collaborating with H&M and to have the opportunity of reaching its wide audience. The collection will be quintessential Versace, perfect for H&M and Versace fans" - a thought-provoking statement from the converted Donatella.

The new exclusive collections and all the other new brand activities have truly established H&M as the brand that more than any other low-priced fashion brand has its finger on the fashion pulse; a brand that even celebrities are happy to exhibit on the red carpet and in exclusive interviews in fashion magazines. H&M has attained the status of a cool, clever and "approved" supplement to the wardrobe of the stars.

In the eyes of the consumer, H&M has become the world's best combination brand. With many hot items from H&M in your closet you have your finances, your conscience, and your basic apparels all taken care of. Then a few other much more expensive brands and catchy items can supplement and help capturing the attention of your surroundings, without the appearance that that's exactly what you are trying to do.

H&M has become the low-price fashion store that consumers prefer to be seen entering, and the low-price fashion brand is the most suitable for even the most fashion-conscious consumers. The effect of this position is clearly visible on the company's bottom line. H&M's annual report for 2010 shows a continued positive trend in terms of earnings with a result of 18.681 billion Swedish kroners after tax, more than 2 billion more than 2009 - not a bad result considering the global financial crisis during which many competitors have collapsed. The magazine Interbrand's report "Top performing European Retail Brands" places H&M as the indisputable leader of the industry with an estimated financial brand value of 11.125 billion Euros.

H&M is a living proof that an explosive redevelopment of the brand by means of a constant stream of new brand activities can move the brand from "fairly good" to "outstanding." The H&M brand has gone from being an acceptable symbol for many

to being the most valuable brand for rich and poor, trendy and untrendy consumers, for whom a vital part of their active, everyday self-staging involves dressing up their physical identity.

Nike's gone surfing

The basic precondition of a brand's consumer advantages, added value and competitiveness is that the brand is different, that it can do something and deliver something that sets it apart from its competitors in the mind of the consumers, something that, more effectively than the competitors, meets the consumers' needs. The rediscovery of the brand identity should therefore help to differentiate the brand in a valuable manner compared to the consumers' alternatives. In other words, the recreation and the constant activation of the brand have to ensure that the brand is not only a suitable symbol, but the most suitable symbol in the consumer's self-staging.

As previously mentioned, the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the brand demands an independent interpretation and use of the trends in society. Surfing anonymously on top of the fast-breaking waves no longer does it. The brand has to find its very own style that brings out the paparazzi with their long photo lenses and makes the consumer judges give it absolute top marks.

In the highly exposed and vulnerable surplus society it's not long enough for a brand to ensure a valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation based on the consumer's desired microscopic *self*. The brand also has to be social-minded and responsible in a unique way so that the consumer, through the brand, can stage himself as exactly that.

Brands are no longer mere symbols telling the story about the consumer in the self-centered micro-perspective. They are also fixtures that can stage the consumer on the larger stage of society's more essential macro-perspective.

The more proactively, offensively and independently the brand acts when meeting the challenges of society, the more powerful a symbol of social awareness and responsibility it becomes.

Far too many brands faced with societal problems react instead of act.

Introducing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in line with the business schools' textbooks cannot make a valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the brand, however.

Learn instead from a brand like Nike. In the 1990s Nike was subject to strong criticism because of its so-called sweatshops, where workers at suppliers' factories in Asia toiled under inhuman working conditions. Today Nike is one of the most adept brands when it comes to promoting its role as the responsible global brand in many different ways.

For the first time in 2008, in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund, Nike sponsored "the Human Race," the world's largest sustainable running race. The registration for the race was online, not via printed brochures. During the race everything was arranged so that the volume of plastic bottles and paper cups was minimized. The sponsors also urged the towns through which the race passed to use sustainable energy and public transportation in relation to the event.

It's remarkable that Nike can organize a racing event in 20 large cities with almost a million participants and run the race as a super-environmentally friendly event. But it's even more extraordinary that Nike has managed to incorporate its unique and highly recognizable high-performance brand and its unique jogging products and features into the identity of the event in a natural, valuable and attention-grabbing fashion.

The Human Race is still held every year in a number of cities worldwide, and it helps to establish Nike as the premier global citizen in the sports world. With the Human Race, Nike has created a brand activity that surfs in an optimal fashion on the wave of social responsibility. Mercilessly Nike delegates other sports brands to second or third place in the competition about social and environmental responsibility and clear conscience. Nothing less will do for the brand that introduced the famous slogan "You Don't Win Silver, You Lose Gold" at the OL at the home turf of Atlanta in 1996. The Human Race is the ultimate kind of CSR branding.

The responsibility of the brand is simply part of its identity, which has to be recreated and activated as persistently as all the other aspects of the brand identity. Merely establishing a best-practice-orientated CSR program has no chance of either creating or retaining the image of the brand as exceptionally socially conscious.

In order to create and retain the clear conscience of the brand at a level where it can be used as an attention-grabbing and valuable symbolic manifestation of the consumer's own conscientious identity the company's CSR program has to be developed and executed as a perfect brand surf, just like Nike's CSR.

With the Nike+ website, the company has also created a virtual world around the Human Race and made the race accessible for the whole world. The Nike+ website urges all passionate runners all over the world to arrange their own race in their community, or just run a 10-kilometer route in their neighborhood and thus participate in the Nike+ Human Race. The philosophy is that in addition to the 30 official Human Race races the virtual Nike+ universe transforms the race into a global event, open to all and accessible everywhere.

People can register and post their results for the Human Race running race via the Nike+ sports kit which is compatible with different versions of the iPod. On the Nike+ website you can also register as a Nike+ Human Race ambassador. Ambassadors are tasked with reporting to the Nike+ site about the race and also recruit and motivate other runners. Finally the Nike+ website acts as a pivotal point socially, not only in connection with the Human Race, but also the rest of the year, where people

report running times and routes and also exchange experiences and results. Nike+ is unequivocally the world's most competitive social online community and thus yet another optimal activation of Nike's unique high-performance-oriented brand identity. In addition, the Nike+ platform on the Internet creates a (constant) buzz around Nike's many brand activities, such as the Human Race.

Talking about Nike and surfing, in 2011 Nike threw itself onto a new and appropriate strategic wave. The company has always primarily promoted the traditional mainstream sports, but over the last couple of years it has tried to focus on more underground sports cultures and action sports by launching Nike SB (skate boarding) and the concept Nike 6.0 (referring to the six action sports Surf, Snow, BMX, Moto, Wake and Snow). In 2011 Nike trumped these initiatives and placed additional focus on the more creative, adrenaline-pumping action sports by launching the campaign The Chosen. The campaign movie "The Chosen" had a clearly defined goal – to build Nike's "street cred." It had a defined target to widen the knowledge and the loyalty among a younger, more dynamic target group. And as always Nike has ambitious goals – to be among the top 3 brands in the action sports category by 2015. Already several recognized surf blogs mention that Nike is becoming an increasingly accepted brand in this hard-to-access and critical target group of self-staging surfers.

No status quo at Nike, no simple repetitions. Once again Nike is paddling purposefully and courageously towards a difficult, but very profitable wave.

The profitable brand surfing continues here in early 2012 in the framework of Nike+. "Make It Count" is the title of Nike's new campaign – urging people to make an even greater and more passionate effort in 2012. The campaign was launched on December 31 on Twitter, which has become the company's preferred means of communications. The campaign appeals to people's inner competitive being and asks us to tweet our own personal ambitions for what we want to achieve in terms of sport in 2012. The ad campaign (as always) includes the most accomplished athletes of the time Mark Canvendish, Rio Ferdinand, Paula Radcliffe and others, who are seen tweeting in small movie sequences. In both places they talk about their goals and ambitions for the coming year. The timing of the launch of "Make It Count" is chosen strategically, since the Olympic Games will be held in London in the summer of 2012. The entire international press will have their lenses focused on London, and Nike wants to be sure it's in the pictures.

From its launch on December 31, 2011 "Make It Count" has created a buzz around the date January 19, 2012 through statements on the website, small viral films, and a continuous stream of tweets urging people to "make it count". On January 19, 2012 Nike introduced the so-called Nike+ Fuelband, an intelligent bracelet that collects and measures all your physical activity. The daily level of activity is measured in calories, in paces, and in Nike's own unit NikeFuel, which is shown on a small LED display. You can key in your daily goals for physical activity measured in NikeFuel points, and a simple graphic scale on the bracelet moves slowly from red to green as you reach your goal for the day. In relation to the launch Nike has created a targeted and relevant story- telling about the algorithm behind the NikeFuel unit developed in

close collaboration with scientists and top athletes. Obviously an app has been developed in connection with NikeFuel, which constantly provides detailed information about your physical level of activity.

The very direct and targeted involvement of the consumer in "Make It Count" is naturally positioned in the slipstream from the Nike+ universe. The social media also play a central role in the attractive, inclusive and competitive campaign. You post your promises and your progress towards the stated goal. You can follow you friends – not least the sports stars – in their personal struggle. Apparently yet another well-prepared and perfect surf, which keeps activating Nike's high-performance-oriented brand identity to the self-absorbed (and competitive) consumer in a credible and appealing manner.

With the introduction of "Make It Count" and Nike+Fuelband Nike has created not only the physical manifestation of the call to "Make It Count;" the company has also, once again, added extra value to the Nike+ concept. From its launch in 2006, Nike+ has managed to involve and motivate joggers and sports enthusiasts with a perfect mix of performance-enhancing high-tech gadgets, social online forums, events, celebrity endorsement, sponsorship, co-branding, the launch of Nike+ collections, and obviously massive marketing through all relevant channels. This is most certainly not the last time Nike has surfed under the Nike+ concept.

In May 2011 Nike's CEO, Mark Parker, presented the annual report, a net result of a staggering 594 million US dollars, and a 14 % gain. Mark Parker explained the company's continued success in a difficult time as follows: »It's also essential that we remain on the offensive, creating opportunities. We do that by connecting with consumers, designing innovative products and delivering amazing experiences.« That means Mr. Nike is still on the lookout for the next perfect surf for his ubiquitous brand, and "he sure knows how to Make It Count." No doubt. Nike's gone surfing.

Make Brand Surfing an internal competition in your group

Even though the business area of the fashion clothes corporation Bestseller is far removed from the Nike products, which have a natural relationship to the elite sports world with its winner mentality and constant balance on the edge of the outrageous, I have never seen a company with a more competitive culture than the one found at the 10 brand houses Jack & Jones, Vero Moda, ONLY, Vila, Object, Selected, Pieces, Outfitters Nation, Name It and Mama-licious – located in Brande, Denmark. With a total staff of more than 12,000, 2,800 own stores, net earnings of 17.4 billion Danish kroner in FY 2010-2011 combined with extremely fast pace in its development, Bestseller is well on the way to becoming the first serious challenger of the fashion giants H&M and Inditex. The Holch Poulsen family, who has been in charge of the group since its start in 1975, has roared into the position of being Denmark's third wealthiest family with an estimated fortune of 34.6 billion Danish kroner.

It's been my pleasure to work on the development of new brand strategies and on marketing for several of the corporation's largest brands, a sometimes hectic experi-

ence where you had to be ready to jump on the surf board at any time; for the people in charge of brand development in Brande have already started paddling when you meet for the first brief.

Despite its location way out in the boondocks in Central West Jutland, there is hardly a company in Denmark who is better at spotting society's turbulent waves of change and knows how to paddle and surf the waves in a timely and extremely profitable fashion.

The ability to brand surf is paramount for Bestseller's many mainstream and value-for-money-oriented brands. If new trends are integrated prematurely it means a mistiming in relation to the relatively late-surfing consumer, and delaying integration of new trends means the fashion value and credibility are lost, a crucial precondition of being able to sell fashion products.

But the people in Brande keep themselves on the edge. Every single workday is an intensive struggle to spot society's turbulent waves of change, not only to beat competing brands from other companies, but preferably also to beat other brands from within the group. The internal competition within the group is not just a matter of earnings and bottom line, but also to an even greater extent about introduction of sub-brands, new collections, marketing and other brand activities. Of course they enjoy each other's success in Brande, but it also smarts to see the colleagues' perfect surfs, and it becomes a motivation to improve the surf in connection with the introduction of the next sub-brand or collection.

The internal brand surfing competition within the Bestseller group has proved extremely profitable with a result for FY 2010-2011 of 2.4 billion Danish kroner. The group's most profitable brand surf, however, is undoubtedly its establishment in China. Figures are not available, but with more than 4,000 stores in 300 cities in China Bestseller's brand surf has been extraordinary in the midst of a Chinese sea of former uniformed communists with an insatiable appetite for the capitalist culture and tradition for fashionable clothes.

The trampoline of independence

There are many energy drinks on the market, but only one that has the valuable differentiation and extreme symbolic value of Red Bull. This energy drink is the epitome of the extreme, notorious and almost feared because of its hugely stimulating effect. The stories of a caffeine content equivalent of 40 cups of coffee are hard to stop, even though Red Bull on his home page tries to deny the rumors by saying that the content is equivalent to one cup of coffee. Nonetheless, Red Bull's charismatic CEO Dietrich Mateschitz has been keenly aware of the value of creating myths around his brand. Here is a quote from an interview with D. Mateschitz: "Is it a drug? Is it harmless? Is it dangerous? That ambivalence is so important. The most dangerous thing for a branded product is low interest." Consumers reports about being unable to come down to earth after a wild night on vodka and Red Bull add to the myth of the product being – without comparison – the world's most effective and "dangerous" energy

drink. The extreme effect is supported and presented by the world's largest and most versatile sponsorships of performers and events within the extreme sports.

Red Bull has not only been surfing on society's most extreme sports and leisure wave, but has contributed substantially to defining and developing extreme sports. With its primary focus on extreme sports, which are often associated with a creative, anarchist underground culture, Red Bull has automatically managed to receive the stamp of approval by the most trend-setting and dynamic consumers.

Today Red Bull has attained the status as the uncrowned king and godfather of extreme sports. Red Bull is the brand connecting all the different extreme sports. The Red Bull can has become a must-have symbol for performers as well as hang-arounds, whether you are paragliding or downhill racing. Performers of extreme sports and the Red Bull product seem to be "a match made in heaven." Untamed, devil-may-dare and "high" they supplement each other's value.

Red Bull is a distinct driver in kite surfing, snowboarding, motocross and ultra-running. In every single extreme sport, from the world's largest to the smallest, Red Bull is the premier sponsor of the professional tour, of some of the most well-known performers, and also the organizer of promotion-oriented events.

Today Red Bull collaborates with more than 500 athletes in 97 sports. But the company does not offer the athletes a formal contract, only a verbal agreement that it will support and help the stars fulfill their dreams. Red Bull CEO Mateschitz refers to these stars as family members. Over the years, the close relationship between the many top athletes has undoubtedly also sparked additional attention around Red Bull in connection with the death of three of Red Bull's athletes, who were killed while performing their neck-breaking sports. In connection with the three deaths Red Bull has appeared in the press to praise the dedicated Red Bull dare devils. The scary facts as well as the myth surrounding the qualities of the product guarantee that Red Bull will keep capturing the attention of the dynamic consumer. Consciously and unconsciously, Red Bull makes sure that surfing with the world's most adrenaline-pumping brand is never boring.

The unique identity and clear mission of the Red Bull brand ensures a high degree of independence, which is a fabulous surf board for recreating and activating the brand in the spirit of the time. Red Bull never stops to look at the competition or at other brands. The fear of being like others is non-existent. Hence Red Bull can allocate all its resources to renewing and facilitating the extreme sports at an awe-inspiring pace, in the same way as the ski runs, the waves and the ramps challenge the fans of the brand.

Red Bull's constantly probing and creative CEO has always had a distinct understanding and knowledge of how to use marketing as a strategic tool. Over several years he has experimented with and bought virtually all types of media. He has produced a steady stream of TV programs, films, magazines, web videos, and websites, always featuring his extreme sports heroes (and Red Bull). He is currently working

on a reality TV concept with Red Bull athletes. He is using the media in a conscious and targeted effort to create a constant buzz and hype around his brand. This active, engaging media strategy has managed to spread the "World of Red Bull" to all main segments of the media. From TV and print to news media and the large music companies. Mateschitz hopes the investment will be profitable one day, but just as with the investment in sports teams he remains patient and is willing to wait. He emphasizes the value that these investments have provided for his brand as being priceless, and very targeted.

Trying to figure out the Red Bull brand as a case story makes your head spin. Every day Red Bull sets a new and innovative standard on some area or another of the sports world. Whether it is organizing "wake boarding" against the current of a dangerous river, sending its surf team off on surf boards designed exactly like the original surf boards under the motto "new school on old boards", or whether they are building "The Secret Half Pipe," a gigantic snow-boarding training facility on the back of Silverton Mountain in Colorado for Shaun White, who later won gold at the Winter Olympics. Project X, as the training facility (or media stunt) was called, was built of natural snow on the side of a cliff, so far from regular training areas that the "red-haired devil" needed a helicopter to take him to his daily training. An extreme activation of the brand identity, right?

Red Bull no longer settles for domination in the extreme sports. Slowly, but surely, it's widening its sphere of influence to more traditional sports in what could be called a recreation of the fundamental brand identity with an extremely vertical and profitable integration of the basic business concept. Red Bull is sponsoring more and more performers and events, but it also owns events and clubs such as Red Bull Salzburg (soccer), Red Bull Leipzig (soccer), New York Red Bulls (soccer), Red Bull Brasil (soccer), EC Red Bull Salzburg (ice hockey) and Red Bull Racing (British Formula1 team), "Scuderia Toro Rosso" (Italian Formula1 team), and Red Bull Racing Team (American NASCAR team).

Imagine a beer brand that establishes new soccer leagues, new versions of the sport of soccer, new soccer events, builds stadiums for the teams, and also runs part of the soccer clubs themselves, and, in addition, with the greed of a Berlusconi, is buying up and developing relevant media – with the sole purpose of adding an exceptionally valuable differentiation of the brand and boost the sale of beer. It's hard to imagine, right? But that is what Red Bull has done within the extreme sports, and it is well on its way to successfully copying the model to more traditional sports.

For the last couple of years Red Bull has also zeroed in on more cultural events, still with the recognizable Red Bull twist, though. In addition to the traveling "DJ battle Red Bull Thre3Style," which celebrates creativity behind the mixer station, Red Bull has been part of the launch and support of the successful concept "Red Bull Flying Bach." This is the (quirky) name of the most entertaining and creative mix of classical music and youth culture. The German breakdance group "Flying Steps" has won the world championship multiple times. In collaboration with opera director Christoph Hagel it has put together a 70-minute breakdance show using the music of Johan

Sebastian Bach's composition The Well-Tempered Clavier (German: Das Wohltemperierte Klavier)

In this creative, cultural field of tension Red Bull Flying Bach has once again surfed a wave which appeals to the ever-searching consumer. The first show was held in Germany in 2010; the group toured the whole of Europe in 2011, and in 2012 it's starting a world tour.

The Red Bull rides again (and again).

Has product quality suddenly become irrelevant?

Red Bull demonstrates, in the most convincing fashion, the declining importance of the product in the promotion of the brand and the success of the company. Any one of the competing energy drinks would have done just as well, if, like Red Bull, they had been independent "first movers" and had packaged their products in the same explosive brand surfing as Red Bull.

As mentioned earlier, it's no longer enough to be able to develop and produce a product with an attractive combination of product functionality and price. Unlike the past, the focus of the consumers is on the symbolic value of the brand.

But that doesn't mean that the quality, functionality and price of the product have become irrelevant. Of course, consumers still want quality, functionality and competitive prices.

If your brand's products do not possess the necessary substance, even the strongest symbolic value won't keep them alive – if, indeed, a brand that lacks substance is able to develop any type of symbolic value whatsoever.

The reason is that the symbolic value of a brand is often driven by its product functionality. Let's take Audi as an example. Audi is more than just a means of transportation in the mind of the consumer. It's a symbol of the owner of the car as being successful, wealthy, quality-conscious, and with a good taste. But it's hard to imagine how Audi could retain its symbolic status if the car did not function optimally. Therefore, insight into the relationship between the functional and symbolic aspects of the brand is the main driver of Audi's continued massive investments in the technological and functional development of its cars. "Vorsprung durch Technik" (progress through technology) is the mantra of the brand, and that is the starting point of Audi's surf on the waves. The functionality of the company's brand is still the main driver for maintaining the brand value, even though the symbolic value is actually the brand value. One is a prerequisite of the other.

DJ Juicers definitely get more sex

In a matter of a few years, the Danish juice and sandwich chain Joe & The Juice has become much more than just that. It's become a lifestyle brand, if anything, and has received huge attention in Denmark. The chain has almost 25 bars in Denmark; soon

it will have four in London, and it plans to open bars in New York. The concept is simple: coffee, smoothies with fresh fruit and vegetables as well as simple, healthy, hot sandwiches, which are prepared at the bar. Many other businesses use this basic concept. What's different? It's "the juicers." But other things as well. Joe and The Juice is a clear example of how to stage a brand as a person and how attractive, emotional and self-expressive advantages are handed over the counter. Joe & The Juice bars have the right locations, often incorporated in the coolest stores and department stores, locations that both match the raw, casual interior décor and the natural, energy-filled ingredients. The Juicers in the bar not only make juice; they perform for the audience as if they were DJ celebrities who are entertaining the young, hip vacationists on a Caribbean island. The music is deafening, and includes the most "in" tunes of the day, which ensures that customers have to shout their order to The Juicers, like at a crowded bar on a Saturday night. Every day is a party at Joe & The Juice. The company carefully cherry-picks the types they hire as Juicers. They have to be good-looking, naturally, but more importantly, they have to have a unique, cool and casual appearance and an extrovert personality rather than the perfect "Abercrombie & Fitch model" associates. They are all creative surfer/skater types with lots of baggy pants and charisma, but they are always smiling sweetly and are ready for a smart, flirtatious remark. Even grey-haired ladies who are riding the surf wave are treated as if they were potential sweethearts. The lightly flirting Juicers are the hottest example of an "urban boyfriend." I am convinced that DJ Juicers get more sex; Joe and The Juice is expanding sales and the number of stores, and I get my fill of healthy food. Everybody is happy.

The chain, which is almost 10 years old, has posted another record result for FY 2010/2011, both in terms of sales and profit. The sales were 47.1 million Danish kroner compared to 25.8 million the previous year. The profit was 5.3 million, more than a doubling of the previous year's result. With super dudes as DJ Juicers, surfing the right waves of health and sex in society is a piece of cake – and it lands right in the lap of the hungry consumer.

Surf on the substance of the brand

Every consumer will cite safety as the most important word that comes to mind when asked about Volvo's most important USP. Volvo has realized a long time ago that its cars are actually no longer safer than other auto makers' cars. And they know that consumers accept that fact. It's obvious, therefore, that the technical specifications and explanations about the safety of a Volvo play a minor role in the marketing of the product.

Although most other cars have caught up with Volvo in terms of safety-oriented, functional benefits, Volvo still enjoys the original association as being the safest car in the consumers' consciousness. In my view, the legacy of "safety first" is a fantastic, substance-rich basis for creating a strong symbolic value for Volvo.

But I think that Volvo has transformed the original starting point of "safety first" into "safe and boring" without any value for the self-staging consumers. Why has the

company positioned itself as a symbol of the typical bourgeois family who lives a timid and ordinary life?

Why has the “safety first” concept not been activated as something that hints at living on the edge, challenging oneself and one’s own boundaries, without losing one’s head and saying good-bye to the family? Why the belt-and-suspenders mentality, when it could be a cool and exciting safety line hanging down the mountain? Why is Volvo not the preferred car for surfers, mountain climbers and elite soldiers? Why hasn’t Volvo become a symbol of the brave, tough and safe MAN with high integrity and contact to nature, who also has good taste? The type of man most women would like to have as fathers of their children? And the man that most fathers wants to be?

Granted, Volvo is in charge of the event “Volvo Ocean Race”, which is recognized as strenuous and a little advanced in the sport of yachting. But if the company wants to progress from belt-and-suspenders to the safety line, the brand and the products have to be written into a much more active and dramatic context. What does the Volvo logo on a smart yacht contribute to the self-staging consumer other than a simple recognition of a car logo which has nothing to do with the product and its consumers?

Why doesn’t Volvo surprise us by joining the harsh reality with its own “Volvo DANGEROUS Tour”, an event that would make the Paris-Dakar car race look like a procession of vintage cars? Let 10 of the world’s most all-round, tough “survivors” take part in a global race loaded with life-threatening challenges for the drivers and their prototype Volvo test cars. The winners would receive 25 million kroners, of which half has to be donated to various relief organizations that focus on safety in the world. The hand-held video reports from the Tour would beat all web TV viewer records and be broadcast around the Internet. The drivers become tough reality stars that will make the winners of Family Robinson look like someone starring in an amateur play for sissies. The new stars’ test cars will pass the ultimate safety test, and the Volvo brand wins the symbolic significance of being the everyday masculine “survivor.”

And what about the modern woman who has to survive in a hectic everyday life with remnants of the chauvinist society of the past still sitting comfortably in the back seat with his feet up. She has to combine the roles of independent individualist, a feminine sex symbol, and a responsible mother. Damn it, she doesn’t want such a wimpy car (or husband for that matter) either.

So why doesn’t the Volvo brand take advantage of its unique and authentic starting point and match the testosterone with the estrogen? Volvo has every opportunity to simultaneously be the car for the real man and for the independent, modern woman.

Volvo has a fundamental appeal for women. Its strong, conscious positioning promoting values such as safety, functionality and solidarity have a far better grip on women than the company is aware of. There is a reason why Volvo is an essential ingredient in the idealized nest-building image with villa, Volvo and dog. I’ll venture the assertion that Volvo is able to “tug at the ovaries” of the nest-building category of women,

if it wants to. But Volvo is making a massive error in this respect. The company has tried, time and again in an almost male chauvinist manner, to appeal to women by designing smaller, naughtier and dynamic women's cars, most recently the C30. But neither the design nor the concept appeals to the modern, independent woman. It's too shallow, contrived and obvious; the car lacks an intelligent interpretation of the Volvo brand's fundamental safety identity in the current spirit of the time. At the time of writing, Volvo is just about to introduce a new model which might become the all-time favorite among modern women. A new crisp version of the old classic V40, undoubtedly meant to be a targeted attempt to create a BMW1 or AUDI A3 killer. Regard it as a legitimate little sister based on Volvo's solid image, DNA and function, rather than an overly popular and short-lived women's car. I firmly believe that would appeal to the dynamic, surfing female target group, to the masculine father, and to the serious single male. All at the same time.

Volvo has every opportunity to surf on the substance of the brand and capture the extremely profitable symbolic value as the car for the masculine, modern man, who is "dangerous," but also a father, and at the same time as the car for the woman, who is a mother, but also independent, feminine and right up there.

Be stupid

I have always loved the jeans brand Diesel. The clothes have suited me, but not really better than clothes from many other brands. When it comes to it, I have not bought many clothes from that collection, just a pair of jeans now and then. I have the feeling that Diesel is a brand you wear from top to toe, a turnkey contractor. Not exactly what I want for my desired *self*. But the company's non-conforming brand identity and the many creative brand performances have made me an aficionado of the brand.

Several years ago I read *Eating the Big Fish* by Adam Morgan, in which Diesel was mentioned as the ultimate example of the concept of "the self-referential identity." That identity is so differentiated that you can only talk about it by referring to yourself. I became a total convert.

During the last few seasons the Diesel brand's performance has shrunk and become less attractive. I believe the company has felt the pressure of the turbulent society and the many new players. Diesel had grown accustomed to its campaign always being the one consumers talked about and the competition leaned against. Suddenly the number of creative brand performances both from actual brands and from non-commercial creative souls exploded on the Internet's new entertainment platforms, such as YouTube. Diesel lost its monopoly on creative and entertaining communication, and became a little desperate.

Diesel's campaigns became increasingly strained. They were weird for the sake of being weird; on the edge for the sake of being on the edge. For example, it hired incomprehensible universes of dancers with black leather masks. Different, yes, but what was the point, and where was the self-irony? Independence and entertainment value were on the way out of Diesel's brand surfing.

It was therefore heart-warming for me when Diesel introduced its spring 2010 campaign titled "Be Stupid." Not only were the self-irony, independence and entertainment back full time. The company has not convincingly recreated its fundamental brand identity. The "Be Stupid" campaign sets the agenda for how a brand ought to think in the transparent and turbulent surplus society, if it wants to be both explosive and attractive, as well as profitable.

I prostrate myself and show you a copy of the text of the campaign video. I cannot find better words myself to describe the ultimate mindset for the brand that wishes to promote profitable brand surfing.

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*"Like Ballons, we are filled with hopes and dreams.
But over time a single sentence creeps into our lives.
Don't be stupid.
It's the crusher of possibility.
It's the world's greatest deflator.
The world is full of smart people.
Doing all kinds of smart things.
That's smart.
Well, we're with stupid.
Stupid is the relentless pursuit of a regret free life.
Smart may have the brains, but stupid has the balls.
Smart recognizes things for how they are.
Stupid sees things for how they could be.
Smart critiques.
Stupid creates.
The fact is if we didn't have stupid thoughts, we'd have no interesting thoughts at all.
Smart may have the plans, but stupid has the stories.
Smart may have the authority, but stupid has one hell of a hangover.
It's not smart to take risks.
It's stupid.
To be stupid is to be brave.
Stupid isn't afraid to fail.
Stupid knows there are worse things than failure...
Like not even trying.
Smart had one good idea and that idea was stupid.
You can't outsmart stupid.
So don't even try.
Remember only stupid can be truly brilliant.
So, be Stupid."*

Unfortunately, the "Be Stupid" campaign had a short and chaotic life. Having gathered praise from the entire world of advertising and several awards, the campaign fell from favor with British consumers, who found that parts of the campaign were offensive, amoral and encouraged asocial behavior. I don't know if this is the reason why the campaign was so short-lived. I actually suspect that Diesel enjoyed the attention and the reconquering of the role of provocateur and agenda-setting lifestyle brand Number One.

In 2011 Diesel launched the sequence to Be Stupid and is thus retaining the recreated brand identity in an offensive manner. The title this time is "Land of the Stupid," and many of the same values, attitudes and statements are being adapted in Diesel's new ambitious story telling. In a press release Diesel sent out its provoking message that "the world is fucked up," that's why the company has created its own island, which is going to be the "Land of the stupid & home of the brave," a mythical Utopia which is presented in a customary ambitious series of viral films and ad campaigns. The key ingredient is telling the story about the establishment of the new society, Diesel Island, of course inhabited by beautiful well-proportioned models in the leading roles. The campaign is studded with a steady stream of thinly-veiled suggestions and bitter, sarcastic, ironic and humoristic comments to the modern "fucked-up" world.

"Instead of conquering an island by killing the natives, we decided to simply buy it (besides, have you seen the price of weapons these days?)"
"Since both capitalism and communism have failed Diesel Island won't adopt any system ending in ism"
"Inspired by some of the world's great nations, Diesel Island pioneers elected as their president the person most likely to be involved in a sexual scandal."

The humor, irony and critical disassociation from society are bound to appeal once again to the modern critical consumer. There are many indicators that Diesel will keep its nose to the ground when it comes to the newly recreated brand identity, surfing perfectly on yet another relevant wave. Diesel is in the process of completing a profitable surf on the wave of a totally crazy chaotic world, towards the "Land of the stupid."

Brand surfing is for everyone

If you and your company are going to promote profitable brand surfing you need a good portion of openness and empathy to spot society's turbulent waves of change, but you also need to be "stupid enough" to recreate or activate the fundamental brand identity in an independent, differentiated, valuable, and attention-grabbing fashion.

For more than 20 years, I have heard one business leader after the other tell me that the branding used by the large international and recognized companies only belongs to those companies and not to their ordinary, unknown company.

I sincerely hope that, whether you are a leader of a company which is b-t-b, b-t-c or b-t-w (whatever) with five or 50,000 employees, you understand that brand surfing is only a simple methodology to ensure that the brand's fundamental identities are recreated or activated with a frequency that ensures that it remains valuable and attractive at all times to the self-absorbed, professional and fast-moving consumer (and buyer). The constant reinvention and activation of the brand identity is a vital task for all companies in the turbulent and transparent surplus society.

Not far from the town of Brande is the town of Herning, where you find the IT heroes of today in the form of the company IT Relation. All 60 employees are not only IT strat-

egist, developers, support staff or project managers; they also assume the role as the customers' IT superheroes, who meet every IT-related challenge with a *no problem*, and they don't sign off until there are absolutely no problems with the customer's IT.

In every aspect, IT Relation distances itself from the bits-and-bytes business culture and similar dull branding of its competitors. In the company's creative offices, the *IT Revolutionen* the customer is transported towards new and more cost-effective IT set-ups in creative processes they have never seen before. The mood, behavior and culture of the company are open, courageous, creative, competitive, and really resemble superheroes all the way through.

The IT superhero does exist and, and this characteristic figure with cape, helmet and punk hair goes into action at times when an extra effort is needed, for example when the handball and soccer teams sponsored by IT Relation need a helping hand. The IT superhero has to be the customer's friend and the company's friend at the same time, and hence plays the role of the employees' alter ego. The employees also try to emulate the IT super hero in order to satisfy both the customers and management. And who does not want to be supported by a genuine super hero in these troublesome times.

IT Relation has tossed all the company's superheroes (the employees) on to society's waves of recession, adversity and downturn, so that they can surf the very best support and service for the customers as well an obvious success for the their place of work.

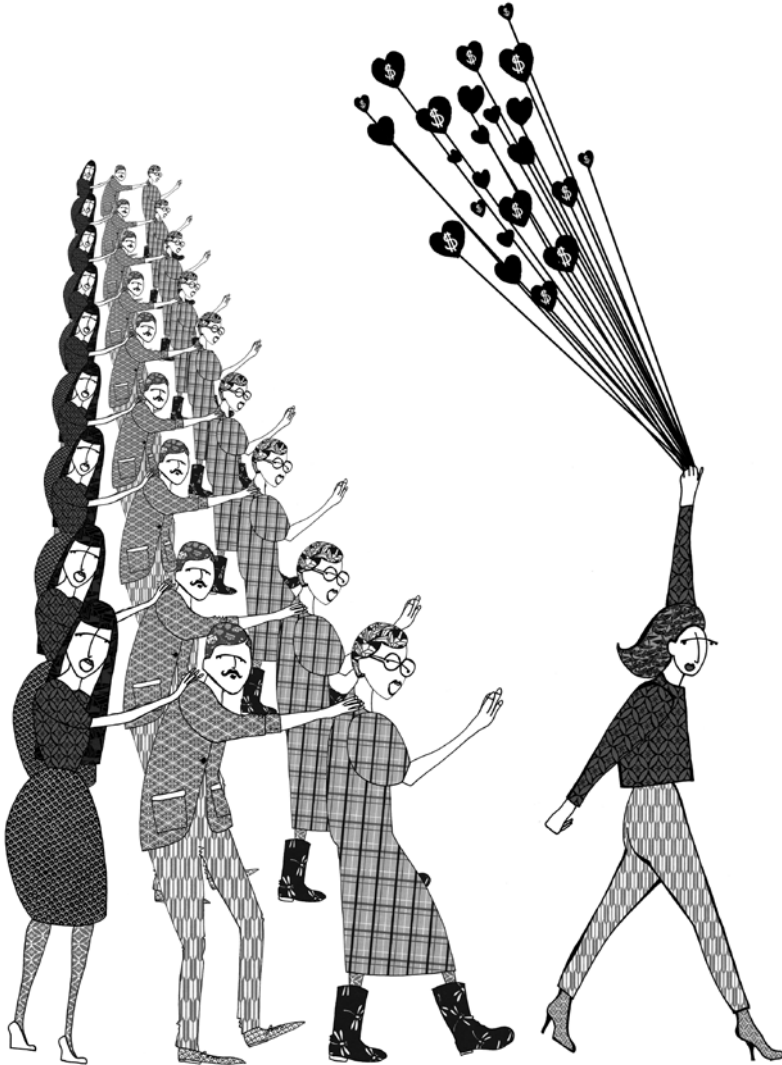
Brand surfing is for everyone. So drop your excuses. Don't run from the waves. Surf them, so you can retain and expand the brand value in the turbulent and transparent user-dominated surplus society and hence secure your company's survival and earning potential.

The message and the market conclusion are clear.

"You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf."

CHAPTER

3 Creative Executive Officer >> The CEO of the Future





Over time, a large number of companies have grown accustomed to optimal retention and market capitalization of their brand value as well as customer advantages.

For the vast majority of companies, the competitiveness could be consistently preserved by just making minor adjustments, an occasional face lift, or slight updates to the products along the way. The company's brands had a long life, and in many cases it could be extended indefinitely, it seemed. The reason was that yesterday's consumers were just as conservative as the companies and also loyal to the company's brands.

In the reality that existed even 10 years ago, small improvements and simple functional additions to the products were sufficient to retain or recapture a brand's value and market shares and prolong the life of the brand.

But the time for conservative and loyal consumers and equally long-lasting brands is over. That situation no longer exists, even though many companies have not yet read and digested the lesson.

The truth is that, irrespective of the greatness of your brand and your company in times past, the culture-bearing consumers of today are ready to desert and betray you. As described earlier, they are in constant pursuit of new props to build up their self-actualization and identity. The pendulum constant swings back and forth with the trend-setting consumers, and they draw a wake of changing preferences and fashion consumption after them. The many stories of stagnant brands and companies that have either closed down or are on their way to going out of business due to society's turbulent waves of change, speak volumes. Either you and your company brands surf together with the consumers, or you're slowly but surely going to drown in society's turbulent waves of change.

With this painful reality in mind, today's companies have to establish a different and far more dynamic approach to the fundamental business model. Even today, but most definitely in the future, companies have to find an alternative way of allocating their efforts in terms of development and market capitalization of their brand value. The company needs to address the issue of the value, relevance and attractiveness of its brand at a much more accelerated pace than before.

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If you want your company to be able to drive the explosive brands that work intensively every day to retain and expand their value and attractiveness, your approach has to be much more creative. The first condition of successful brand surfing is the company's ability to develop both the ideas that can recreate the company's brands, and subsequently the ideas that can regularly activate the company's brands at the top of society's turbulent waves of change in an optimal fashion. At any time, the brands of the company have to appear to be in harmony with and an expression of the spirit of the time, and hence be seen as relevant, exciting, contemporary, and attractive. The second condition is the ability of the company to carry out the ideas fast and effectively – a topic which, irrespective of its equal relevance, is not being discussed in this book.

Probably you will assume that the need for recreation and activation of the brand within the spirit of the time varies from industry to industry and company to company. You are right. Some companies find themselves in less turbulent surroundings and have more long-lasting relationships with their customers than others. Some companies are not quite as dependent on the waves of the spirit of the times, because the company's products are technical solutions, chemical or medical products, or services that require more know-how and insight than many other products. Or they may be ingredients that are part of the finished product. As far as such companies are concerned, you are right in assuming that these companies are only partially exposed to the disloyal spirit of the time. But consider the situation, nevertheless. The hard-hitting surf from the waves of change will, sooner or later, reach every industry and every company in the transparent, turbulent surplus society. We are talking about a clear cultural trend.

The customers in the industrial and business-to-business companies may, in certain cases, react more slowly to the changes and new potential than the companies that sell so-called "high touch" products. But these companies are exposed to the same fundamental challenges, the same societal trends, and the same development as other companies, only at a staggered pace. There is every possible reason to take the fundamental changes in society seriously and stop running the company in essentially the same way as in the previous millennium. We have moved into a new era, but far too many people have not grasped the logic of the new millennium.

The alarm has gone off at the highest volume announcing an awakening in the correct time zone, and there is no snooze button. Companies, brands, and services of every ilk come and go at a record pace. Company employees who rise early and put in more hours and work more efficiently than the competitors' employees still give the company an edge. But more, faster, and cheaper products and services of the

“wrong” kind will still lose out to the “right” kind with the professional, self-staging consumers and their representatives (the shoppers). Careful nursing of the brand will lose out to timely development in the transparent and turbulent surplus society.

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives; nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change” (Charles Darwin). That’s not a bad assessment considering the year is 1859, and the conclusion still holds and has assumed an added urgency in the new millennium. Stupidity does not take us far, but we don’t have to possess the highest insight in order to be on the winning team. What we need is the ability to see, grasp, move, and form new alliances in line with the time.

Wake up. The left-brain-oriented slumber is over. No matter how well you believe your company is protected by its capital and competitiveness, you cannot be asleep any longer. If you do, you’ll be late for the retention and expansion of the company’s brand value, and the nightmare will begin.

The time has come to start the company’s creative revolution; time to create a holistic and creative company, a company with a licence to operate explosive brands and the ability to ensure the company’s profitable market capitalization. The time has come to start the profit-oriented creative company.

When studying the companies behind some of most successful explosive brands, e.g. Apple, Google, Facebook, Diesel, H&M and Red Bull, it’s evident that they have a clear focus on the type of creativity that can retain or expand the company’s value and attractiveness. In those companies, creativity plays a decisive role on all levels – the strategic, the competency-related, and the cultural.

Creativity is King

Creativity is money

On the strategic level, the companies behind the most successful explosive brands have realized that creativity leads to a profitable top line. They understand that an attractive brand value is the necessary foundation for generating healthy revenue for the company. They also recognize that frequent redevelopment of the brand is necessary in order to retain or expand its value and also that creativity plays a decisive role in its implementation.

They are even aware that creativity is the road to radical changes in the way the company is run, in terms of procurement, production, distribution, service and administration. These changes can fundamentally improve the cost structure of the company and hence cut down cost considerably more efficiently than the ordinary, simple, classic and predictable cuts on the debit side.

When American Apparel’s creative and constantly controversial CEO Dov Charney introduced his principles about a vertical and integrated production, it was not only his

intention to become a political vanguard for better working conditions and immigration reform in order to polish the company's CSR halo. It was also with the intent of creating a sustainable business. At the end of the 1990s Dov Charney's thinking contradicted all other fashion businesses. Rather than outsourcing all the production to less labor-intensive countries like China and India, he established his company and production in Downtown L.A. The location became not only an essential and naturally integrated part of the identity of the company (and you can never spend too much time broadcasting your brand's identity); it also became a different way of doing business.

The vertical and integrated production method presents the opportunity for American Apparel to be super effective and create the shortest possible production time from the designers' sketches to the finished styles. Every product is distributed to American Apparel's 260 stores world-wide. Around 4,000 people work in the factories in small autonomous groups. The groups themselves decide the daily production schedule and the distribution of labor, and thus the working groups decide their own hourly wages. By using this working model AA has succeeded in tripling production with less than a 20 % increase in the number of employees.

Despite the innovative business model, the formerly "hip" American Apparel brand experienced substantial challenges, and in 2011 bankruptcy was imminent. The three factors that have ensured the company a unique position and lots of attention – the company's CEO, marketing, and the production method – also appear to be what hit the brand, in different ways, as a boomerang the last few years. American Apparel has been the subject of massive criticism and negative attention. Not only has Dov Charney been charged in several cases of sexual harassment by his employees.

The company has also received bad press for allegedly firing plain-looking employees. In that case, Dov Charney defended himself by saying that, true enough, the company wanted employees with a prominent and independent style. That announcement was not very well received. In addition, the company has faced massive production problems after it had to fire 1,500 workers who were working illegally in the US. Finally, the company, which is quoted on the stock exchange, has had constant problems delivering timely financial reports. That's been yet another reason for the press to present the company as an 'enfant terrible'. American Apparel's critical, alert, and fast-surfing target group has undoubtedly seized upon this sustained negative attention, and that may be the logical explanation for why the company today is buried neck-deep in quicksand.

In the profit-oriented company it is vital to realize that *creativity is an important means of attaining the desired financial results, but never a goal in itself.*

However, a high level of creativity and management of the company's topline does not justify a sloppy effort on the more left-brain-oriented focus areas, such as management and control leading to a strong bottom line. The high level of creativity is just the prerequisite and the means of ensuring a healthy topline from which to create a strong bottom line.

Creativity is a crucial competency

The world's most recognized design and innovation company, Apple, retains its competitive edge by constantly focusing on an extremely thorough and painstakingly prepared design process that ensures the production of the magical products. Apple has consciously chosen to invest gigantic resources and a lot of passion in developing very few products, and in turn making them exceptionally high-quality. Hence Apple is seeking the most obsessive designers and engineers, passionate and scrupulous people, who may be fanatic in their approach, even when it comes to the bending of a screw under a MacBook Air.

For many years, Apple's dynamic duo consisted of Steve Jobs and Jonathan Ive, Apple's Chief of Design. The two of them were in charge of hiring exceptionally accomplished designers and engineers whom they in one sense let loose, but also kept on a tight leash in order to keep them close to Ive's and Job's overall design philosophy. This hiring procedure has assured Apple a small, exclusive and very established design team including some of the world's top-talented designers. The team has designed the most celebrated successes for Apple since the launch of the revolutionary iMac in 1998. An example is the idea of creating Pixel-perfect prototypes – construction of completely finished and perfect models – which, according to Apple, is crucial in order to evaluate the total experience of a new Apple product. Hence the company has spent enormous amounts of time and money creating perfect prototypes.

Another principle in Apple's design process is called "10 to 3 to 1." Simply speaking, it means that every designer has to develop 10 entirely different prototypes of every new feature or product. Based on some pre-determined criteria the design team selects three of these prototypes. Subsequently it spends months developing the three ideas. In the end, the field has been narrowed down to the idea they most believe in. Very few organizations have enough ice in the stomach to discard 90 % of their ideas, but Apple does not compromise. In the further process, two very different types of meetings are taking place between designers and engineers: "brainstorming meetings" – where the relevant projects are subjected to outrageously audacious and wild suggestions (there are no limits to the madness, and the floor is open) – and "production meetings" which attempt to rein in and structure the inputs that have emerged from the "brainstorming meetings." These two kinds of meetings continue throughout the entire process, and more than anything, they clearly express the company's perfectionist DNA with creativity as the crucial means to reaching the goal of the perfect products. Apple also points out that this design process keeps the door open for new creative inputs right up until the completion of the product.

The steady stream of smart "must-have" Apple products speak volumes of the company's profitability. However, creativity is not only an essential competency in the development and design of new products. We have to think about creativity from a totally different perspective. Creativity has to be integrated into our way of thinking and doing business. In this millennium, creativity is a crucial competency which belongs in the boardroom, among executives, and within the entire business management. When confronted with today's challenges, creativity is much more and something entirely different than design. It has to be incorporated and applied on all levels and

in most work duties in the company, whether the employees are focused on retaining or expanding the brand value, selling the company's products, cutting costs, and/or improving efficiency.

Creativity is a key element that, more than anything else, separates the mediocre from the exceptional and the winners from the losers. But more importantly, seen from the perspective of the company's earning and survival capacity, creativity is the competency that you ignore at your own peril. If your company lacks creativity, then stagnation, the red card from the fast-surfing consumers, as well as a sudden drop in revenues, are just around the corner.

A specific culture is needed to promote Creativity

Your company won't automatically be transformed to a company that knows how to operate the profitable explosive brands simply if you, the chief executive, suddenly realizes that your company needs to be creative and you ask your employees to focus on creativity.

The creative companies recognize that in order for creativity to find fertile ground a specific culture has to be established that respects and promotes creativity, a culture with a radically different approach to business compared to the practices of most conservative companies.

Google has repeatedly been named the world's most creative company. The reason is without doubt the creative culture that has been cultivated very deliberately. At Google's headquarters, Googleplex in Mountain View, California, a conscious attempt has been made to create a youthful and informal college campus environment. First of all, the facilities at the employees' disposal are the best fringe benefits for employees in the world. They are strategically chosen to prompt play, fun, friendship, and solidarity. Free transportation is provided, efficiently moving employees around on the expansive campus. There is a choice between a regular bicycle, a scooter or a tandem bike with room for eight people, in case you need to have a meeting on the way. All over campus there are small Tech Stops that provide IT support or repair your computer in no time. There are laundry and dry-cleaning facilities, and you can also have an oil change done on your car, while you're at work. There are doctors, physiotherapists and masseurs saving people time to attend to such things. The campus also has exercise rooms, outdoor volleyball and basketball courts, and swimming-pools. All sorts of games and toys – for exercise, entertainment, play, relaxation, and leisure – are, of course, available. Transportation from San Francisco is provided. Employees can take a comfortable bus with Wi-Fi and thus take advantage of the daily transportation time to work. There is also a car-sharing arrangement where you can share one. Employees meet several times a day in the 17 cafeterias that serve three free meals a day, not ordinary, boring, and unhealthy canteen food, but well-prepared meals made from the best raw ingredients; for example, vegetables are grown in small gardens on campus. The comfortable and informal atmosphere is also created by the employees themselves, who are allowed to arrange their offices as they please – the more creative and wild the better. There's even a competition for the most crea-

tive office. And, to make things even cosier, employees are actually allowed to bring their dog to work.

The employees enjoy the attractive, creative environment at Googleplex, sometimes around the clock, not necessarily to work, but also to hang out, exercise, do programming, and socialize. The informal interaction and solidarity also creates an environment where the employees not only feel safe but are highly motivated to generate new creative ideas.

The top to bottom of business creativity

The successful profit-oriented creative businesses have both a creative top and a creative bottom which together form a productive, creative culture.

The creative top includes a business identity and a CEO who promotes creativity. Think (IBM), Think Different (Apple), Just Do It (Nike), Vorsprung durch Technik (Audi), and We Try Harder (Avis), Unlike Any Other (Mercedes) may only be slogans, but they do define the company's identity and send open invitations to the employees to think differently and innovate.

The direct invitation to innovate must come from the top executive of the company in order to be effective. He or she is the only one who, through his or her personality and behavior, philosophy, and priorities, can release a chain reaction of creativity right down through the organization.

An initiating creative top is an absolute prerequisite for establishing a performing, creative bottom. Not until the creative leadership has initiated creativity at the highest level of the company can a high degree of creativity among the employees be expected. The core competency of these employees is creativity, and a positive reception can be expected from those whose primary job is to execute innovation.

The creative top and bottom have to be closely connected before the company can promote the profit-oriented creative business culture, where the company's organization has a high level of creativity, takes independent initiatives, and, without being asked, produces many profitable ideas that will retain and expand the company's brand value.

On the creative bottom it's vital that the the creative team and the project managers agree on a mutual understanding of creativity and of creating the most suitable work conditions. It's a matter of establishing a creative culture where the employees focus on both development and implementation of the new business ideas and meet in a common universe of mutual respect and appreciation of the common goal – to implement and capitalize on the most valuable and profitable ideas.

The key to healthy and close collaboration on the creative bottom is a both-and approach, where the project managers comprehend the genetics of the profitable idea (valuably differentiated) and the required creative work conditions. The creative em-

employees, on the other hand, must accept that creativity is only a means, not a goal in itself, and that every idea that is not carried to fruition is completely worthless and unprofitable.

The creative employees and the project managers obviously approach the task from different angles, but it is your job, up there on the creative peak, to make sure they meet in the middle in a shared excitement over “idealizing.” No significant expansion of the company’s creativity will happen until the creative top executives initiate, drive and motivate creativity, while the creative bottom combines its individual competencies in innovation and implementation, respectively, in constructive and targeted interaction.

The Top and Bottom of Business Creativity

The Creative Top

Companies that encourage creativity

The profit-oriented creative business culture



CEO = Creative Executive Officer, who initiates creativity

Employees initiate creativity



Involvement of Creative employees in creative projects



Involvement of project managers Employees in creative projects

The Creative Bottom

Leave the stronghold of narcissism

From false facts to profitable maybe’s

Like most other people, the top executives of conservative companies are driven by fear. Fear of making mistakes, fear of public ridicule. Fear is the strongest driver of human beings, including the top executive. We are fearful of sending a new product on the market, because we are scared that it’ll fail. We fear that our next ad campaign will be a joke and not what we want it to be – a good joke. We are fearful that we won’t

meet the budget goals in the next quarterly statement, and we fear the board's and the media's negative reaction. We all want to be fearless winner types who exude a winning mentality, but the truth is that more often than not we are guided by fear. A depressing truth. We are scared, we are stressed out, and we are defensive fighters in life as well as in the game of business.

Most people (including top executives) do everything they can to avoid making mistakes and stay on the plus side. At any time, we try to sell the solutions we are familiar with and can handle, the solutions whose effect we think we know and hence can calculate the results. We choose "safety" in the belief that "safe" solutions will remove any kind of risk of making mistakes and ultimately being the subject of ridicule in the eyes of the world.

The top executives of conservative companies virtually always try to avoid the unknown. The unknown means uncertainty, and hence the risk of making mistakes cannot be eliminated. Fear of the unknown drives the top executive towards what I call "the false answer key" of the past.

Top executives who are driven by fear kill any motivation among employees to think innovatively and differently, and the false answer keys of the past are as far removed from the Brand Surfing manual as you can possibly imagine. The fear-driven top executive is useless in the role as the vital, initiating, and creative leader of the company.

All decisions and initiatives in the conservative companies are made based on so-called deductive or inductive reasoning, which in different ways make a positive conclusion based on the past.

Deduction is a so-called logically valid reasoning where the conclusion is a result of the premises. Crows are black. I see a brown bird, hence I conclude that the brown bird is not a crow. In evaluating a new product from the design department which does not match anything that has previously been seen on the market, the product is rejected. Deduction will never lead to anything new when the decision is based on the idea that it has to be similar to something that already exists.

In the induction approach, the individual cases are observed and a general conclusion is made. Statistics is one of the tools of this type of thinking, just as logic is the tool of deduction. In Europe we only see white swans, hence we conclude that all swans are white, but in Australia there are actually black swans. It's like automatically refusing to introduce a new product on the market because at one time rumor has it that the introduction of similar products failed for other brands.

But the solutions that have bestowed success or failure on the company's or competitors' brands as well as all the statistics in the world cannot deliver the creative inspiration needed to recreate or activate the company's brands in the spirit of the time.

Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) was the father of the mini-computer and the leading manufacturer up through the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, but

DEC could not imagine (looking at the past) that the computer could serve as a personal and customer-friendly working tool at an affordable price. DEC's founder and CEO, Ken Olsen said, as early as 1977: "There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in his home."

The same year, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak started Apple Computer Corp. Over more than three decades, Apple and many other PC brands have proved Ken Olsen's statement wrong – big time!. Apple has more money in the bank than the US government. In the 1970s DEC held the most valuable lottery ticket in the world, but the company never knew how to redeem it, because it had no concept of the value it had in its hand, provided it had been utilized correctly. DEC was thinking conservatively and based on the past.

Of course Ken Olsen was right that no one really needed a computer at home, especially seen from the perspective of yesterday's work norms. No one really needs a PC (in order to live or survive), but try to explain today's consumers anything based on that logic. That's when you will discover the downside of your conservatism, being seen as hopelessly outdated.

The conservative companies of the past need to revise their perception of risk, error, and failure and disregard the false "answer key" of the past. They need to understand that simple repetitions of yesterday's solutions lead directly to a reduction in the value of the brand as well as the earning capacity of their company. The most serious mistake a company can make is repeating the simple solutions of the past; those "safe repetitions" present the greatest risk for the company and the clear path to failure for you, the chief executive.

Conservative companies need to shift their focus from the false data of the past and concentrate on what I call the profitable maybe's.

In the future, companies have to concentrate all their efforts on researching new solutions, solutions that do not yet exist, and these cannot be validated by referring to the past. The profitable maybe's are the solutions that come about by daring to imagine something that is not yet there. Solutions that are not guaranteed to succeed. The profitable maybe's are solutions where the decision to start can only be based on feelings and intuition.

But the pursuit of the profitable maybe's is not a matter of naively and blindly introducing new brands, products and activities based on vague ideas, but rather searching for ideas which have real potential of grabbing consumers' attention and giving them a positive surprise, thus retaining or expanding the value of the brand. The profitable maybe's must be pushed forward in a speedy and effective stop-and-go innovation process assuring the necessary improvements and potential implementation of the ideas as cost-effectively as possible before the ideas become outdated.

Google's goal-oriented approach focuses on creating a culture that is not fear-driven, a culture where people are encouraged to take creative chances and are proud to be

working creatively and fearlessly. No time is spent on heavy, lengthy market analyses; creative ideas are developed, implemented, and launched, and they are later adjusted according to feedback from consumers. Google's employees are trained to have the courage to take chances creatively, to be intrepid, creative bolts of lightning.

Steve Jobs, more than anyone, was a man who pursued profitable maybe's. When he was involved in developing Apple's new products he primarily used himself as the target group, as the epitome of the future Apple user. Time and again he declared, both stubbornly and proudly, that Apple does not conduct market research. "You cannot ask the consumer what he wants and then try to give it to him. Before you've finished making the product the user wants something entirely different." Steve Jobs also used to refer to Henry Ford's famous statement, "If I'd asked my customers what they wanted, they would have told me" a faster horse."

Only the future can validate the profitable maybe's, the way it happens at Apple and Google.

Revolt against your inner conservative business man

If you want to create the profit-oriented creative company with the capacity to define and explore the profitable maybe's, you have to start at the root of your present conservative business culture: Yourself. The journey towards the more creative company starts at the top with the fundamental identity and your leadership of the company.

As chief executive you have to face your inner conservative businessman who seeks control and safety and also fears the new and unknown that the turbulent society and creativity represents. The "safe" solutions don't exist. "Best practice" means using other people's effective solutions, and "business as usual" equals doing everything the way it's always been done. "Best practise" and "business-as-usual" are the direct road to obsolescence and loss of value.

You have to get rid of the immune defense of change as presented by the false solutions of the past, as well as your own static world view, unless you want to be the future answer to the DEC top executive, who did not believe in the PC; the Xerox executive, who saw no value in the graphic interface, or SONY's top boss, who failed to capture the MP3 category in continuation of the brand's favorable Walkman position. Or the Blockbuster management that ignored that physical movies are "so last year." The Sony Ericsson and the Nokia executives, who weren't smart enough to design smart phones in time.

You have to rid yourself of the fear of failing and being the subject of ridicule as well as your fear of the unknown, which constitutes exactly the potential to ensure yourself and your company the desired success.

You have to put a lid on the fear-driven macho-manager, who has a tendency to flatten everything but his own version of the market and business universe; consciously or

unconsciously. You have to realize that your status as the top referee of the company may create clarity and structure in charting a straight course in the daily operations of the company, but the danger is that that course is far too narrow-minded and untenable. If the development of the company's brands rests solely on your one-sided, reactionary and immovable universe you may have charted a course for the company that leads straight to the abyss.

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Your strategies and solutions for the future will meet few counter arguments. You stand firm and get your way, but you may be wrong. Your strength may turn out to be your biggest weakness, and your self-important use of power becomes the biggest threat for the company. You have to use your influence to occupy the position at the company's creative leader and initiate the required creativity among your employees.

It goes without saying that the employees need a clear direction in their everyday work, and of course they need a captain to make the final decision with a steady hand. But they don't need a leader who blindly trusts his own frozen, outdated world view in a world where the waves roll in unpredictable ways and break with previously unseen speed. The top leader who has not radically developed himself and his perspective of doing business over the last 5-10 years finds himself mentally in the industrial and information society (i.e. the previous millennium), but the company he has to lead, including all its assets, stands in the middle of the creative war zone of the transparent, turbulent and user-dominated surplus society.

Leader jugend

The company's masculine supermen tend to recruit leaders who are very similar to themselves – same personality, same competencies, same background – and hence they are perpetuating the company's course down the slippery slope. "He should be something like me," is often the most important brief to HR and the recruiting consultant. Does that sound familiar?

The mental partnership and the shared CV in management set limits to the openness, the curiosity, and the visions in the company at a time when all antennas and all senses ought to be fine-tuned and fully alert.

Educational institutions, the business media, recruiting firms, and the companies themselves are busy confirming each other in the matrix of the big, strong and authoritative top executive who can organize, rationalize, and downsize heavy-handedly and methodically.

As chief executive in the more creative company of the future you have to renounce your membership of the "leader jugend" and eliminate the masculine and conservative domination in your company. You have to let go of the "managerial inbreeding" and expand diversity in the company. It's too risky only to tap ideas for the redevelopment of your company's brands and other vital changes from your own and other MBAs' narrow focus on the false facts of the past.

The creative revolution

Try something new

Over the last 10 years, there has been a plethora of case stories, articles, and books that all point to new and more creative avenues for the companies of the future. *Funky Business, Eating the Big Fish, Blue Ocean Strategy, Leading The Revolution, Find Your Next, Tipping Point* and *A Whole New Mind* are just some of the many book titles that focus on the diverse, holistic and creative company. The case stories in the books are built around dynamic, creative, and very profitable companies like Apple and Google, but also lesser know organizations like Cirque du Soleil and Southwest Airlines.

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The concept of “creative leadership” is also rumbling in the financial media and in the most current management literature. However, it seems to be more of a fad. In 2010, IBM’s Institute for Business Value made a survey among 1,500 CEOs from 60 countries and 33 industries, which emphasized creativity as the most vital competency for a CEO. Creativity was rated even higher than integrity and global insight. That’s saying a lot.

The future may see a more nuanced profiling of the most attractive business leaders, but striving for an identity as a more creative CEO is apparently not without its challenges. The creative CEO should not expect to be declared a management super hero overnight. An academic analysis made in collaboration among several American universities concluded that people in a work place who initiate creative ideas are often regarded by their colleagues as having limited leadership potential.

The survey pointed out, among other things, that stereotypical impressions of creative people as being unfocused and excentric meant that it was considered less likely that creative employees would be promoted to leading positions. These biases will soon be belied by the future top leaders who will know how to use creativity as a means, but not as a goal in itself, in the pursuit of profit; top leaders who’ll continue where Steve Jobs left off.

The creative revolution in the business world has already started, so don’t be scared when you start your development work, both with yourself and with your whole company, of making your business more creative in a profit-oriented way. You won’t be ridiculed. On the contrary; you have “free passage” to change. It’s safe to read on.

Now is the time to drop out of MBA class and enroll in the MBC course instead. You need to be a master of business creativity. Masters of administration have no competencies in retaining or expanding the brand value in the turbulent, transparent and user-dominated surplus society. It’s the masters of business creativity who will decide the fate of the company.

In the section below you will find a simpel suggestion for the basic thinking of business creativity that could replace some of the left-brain-dominated thoughts, attitudes and principles.

The time has come to try to think completely new thoughts, in order to get more valuable and profitable results than before. The basic thinking of business creativity can lead you on the road off the treadmill of fear – the worthless repetitions of the company's brand – on to the company's creative summit, where you can direct your gaze away from the false solutions of the past and provoke the profitable maybe's; where you can initiate creativity and start building the profit-oriented creative company.

Shut up and listen

"I know that. I know them very well. I have heard about it. I have thought about it. You can't do that. It won't sell. They don't want to do that. They don't say that. That's not true. I don't believe that. It can't be done. We cannot afford that. We don't know how to do that. We've tried that before. We know how to do that." Quote from the conservative, masculine CEO.

It's time for you to stop believing and acting as if people expect you to have all the answers. Customers, colleagues, the board, collaborators, and also friends (and your wife, for that matter) can't stand people who have answers to all the questions, whatever the subject.

Believing that you know everything about anything; believing that you know all there is to know about the feelings, desires, and needs of consumers, employees, and collaborators; believing that you already have all the solutions to what can make your brand attractive means rejecting the knowledge, insight, and opportunities that can point the way to new attractive solutions for your company's brand.

Rather than believing you have the answers, ask the questions and listen with an open mind to the answers. You'll get nowhere by just translating all the answers to what you want and expect the answers to be.

Market empathy means listening attentively to the market and being able to put yourself in the consumers' shoes, feeling what they feel and understanding them at an intuitive level. When it comes to vital information and inspiration, there's an enormous difference between the blind, arrogant belief that you always have the right answer ready in your mind, to having established an open, emotional connection to the needs and thoughts of the consumers.

It may take years of experience in serious empathy to acquire the right emotional connection to the consumers. But start now by clearing your head. Wipe the slate clean. Let go of your self-importance and hence your bias when it comes to the future solution for your company's brands.

Recognizing that you have to listen and open up the assignments rather than cutting them off by your initial attitude and your own, most often very ordinary and predictable, solution (stemming from your linearly thinking left brain) is absolutely crucial for your company's future.

Therefore, the first thing to do is to establish a boundless openness and curiosity when it comes to the market and the world. Put intuition, empathy, and impressions high on the agenda in the company's creative revolution. You'll find the ideas for an effective recreation and activation of the company's brands in the spirit of the time at the point when, for a moment, logic stops and the GPS of the mind becomes muddled; when you have opened your eyes; when you listen, sense and taste; when you are ready to receive new input from unfamiliar universes and have an open, honest and constructive attitude to your own as well as others' suggestions.

So shut up and listen for a moment.

End normalization – start specialization

I call the most conservative CEOs "normalizers."

Managers and employees who do things as they have always been done, look for best practise, and follow the established rules on the market generally have ample opportunity to advance in the organization. "Normalizers" thrive like fish in water in the conservative companies.

Normalization is driven by the fear of losing customers, revenue, and earnings by doing something different from what everyone knows is the "right" thing to do.

Some companies consciously aim to live up to the official standards of the product category 100 %. Other companies just cut the top off any exceptional development suggestions thus diminishing their chance of appearing as new, differentiated, attention-grabbing and valuable.

The company's managers and owners see pioneering – and hence unfamiliar – solutions as something that entails a lot of risk; that's why they try to avoid what is unusual and go for what is normal.

But as mentioned earlier, the risk profile of the normalizing top executive is actually quite different from what it seems.

It means doing what appears to be risk free – what is normal – what has always been done, or what others have done; it's simple repetition, which does not give consumers the unique, new and valuable products they are attracted to and demand.

The normalizing leader is unaware that his own risk profile is a ticking bomb under the company's topline and a clear path away from the ideas that can retain or expand the company's brand value and thus ensure a profitable growth for the company.

In the transparent, turbulent and user-dominated surplus society it's exceptional initiatives that have to recreate and activate the fundamental identity of the brand so that it will attract the consumers' attention, give them a positive surprise, and

win their favor. Small scratches on the surface of the market don't do it for the self-staging, professional and attention-seeking consumers.

The time has come to recognize that normalization and simple repetitions are the biggest risks for the company.

It's obvious that fewer and fewer consumers are attracted to what is normal, ordinary and predictable. So why adapt the company's development culture (or lack of same) to an approach that ensures repetition and "develops" what is normal?

Turn your company's development culture on its head.

Instead of studying the new suggestions from the customers, employees and collaborators to see if they conform to the existing rules of the game on the market and can easily be implemented, start investigating whether they represent anything new and exceptional.

Now is the time to reinterpret the work 'specialization'.

Specialization is not only a matter of restrictions and knowing one's trade.

It's a matter of being unique, but also creating value for the consumers.

How can a "normal" brand give the consumers the sensation of being something unique, and provide the opportunity to stand out from the crowd? How can a "normal" company make the employees feel part of something really special?

End the normalization and start specializing.

The weak may be the smart ones

New thinking about the company's brands and the very foundation of the company are often "dealt with" at meetings where the "best" proposals with the strongest arguments win.

People who take part in meetings about development proposals, who argue in favor of such proposals and evaluate them usually share a *common* frame of reference based on the company's and the brand's history, culture, strengths and not least existing rules of the game in the market and best practice in the industry.

Hence the future of the company rests entirely on the past. Rather than debating whether the fundamental brand identity will continue to have relevance and attractiveness going forward and thinking about whether the identity can be activated optimally in the spirit of the time, the company's brand direction and business development concentrate on respecting where the company came from, the existing rules of the games in the market, and best practices.

It's not even certain that the best arguments win among the pool of rational arguments and sensible, fear-driven solutions based on the false results of the past. Usually it's the person who argues best that wins, but that does not mean that that's the best argument, the best proposal, or the best solution.

The rational proposals, based on deductive and inductive reasoning, presented by the person with the strongest position and the biggest weight will most probably win the battle about the brand's and the company's future.

But a proposal based on following the existing rules of the game on the market, being presented by the strongest debater in the company will most likely not be the most profitable solution, considering we live in a world where brand differentiation and delivery of new value to the consumers is of paramount importance and should be based on a deep and intuitive appreciation of their needs.

If you are a powerful, masculine and best-practise-oriented top executive who normally wins the strategic battles in the company due to your rational argumentation in favor of the false results of the past, my advice to you is: keep your dominating personality and the sharp verbal duels at bay. In reality, you only want to manifest your status and position in the company, right?

Move aside and let those who don't talk so loudly get their chance; those who cannot really explain what they mean; or those who dream and feel rather than debate and argue. Those may be the people who have the strongest empathy for the consumers and are better at sensing and feeling which product, campaign or behavior will give the consumers something new and valuable.

The "weakest" players may sometimes be the most intelligent when it comes to retaining and expanding the brand value in the transparent, turbulent and user-dominated surplus society.

Make it acceptable to say what you believe and feel is the right solution for the company, even though you are unable to argue in favor of the solution. Make the development environment sufficiently relaxed for the "weak" to have the courage to stand up and say what they feel.

As a leader, be aware that your own position and weight can be your own worst enemy. Don't misinterpret the role of the leader as one where you always have to stand firm, make fast decisions, and make yourself heard at any price.

Stop the destructive, rational argumentation and verbal power struggle in the company. Respect your gut feelings (i.e. your subconscious; read about it in chapter 4) and your empathy. Concentrate on the antennas and turn down the amplifier when the company needs to establish the emotional connection to the market.

It's absolutely essential.

Yes we can

We all want to be successful, reach our goals, and avoid wasting our own and other people's time and resources. If ideas for products, services and marketing are not implemented they are a waste of time and money.

Therefore, the first thought and the first criterion when talking about the company's brand development is usually whether the ideas are realistic or not.

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The company needs to think critically and have a selective approach to whether the suggested ideas will really recreate or activate the fundamental identity of the brand within the spirit of the time, and whether they can be implemented or not. Otherwise, the company would be catastrophically off course and so would the cost side. The problem with realism is that it sneaks in and becomes a sharply limiting factor in the company's creative development processes.

When you're in a creative development process with the company's management and open your bag of innovative ideas, there's an immediate reaction. The top executives start blinking; they become restless and move around on the chair as if they've got fleas in their pants.

If a thorough thinking process has been completed, the immediate (un)realistic solution is a breach of the rules of the game on the market, which will lead to a unique idea, one that's unlike anything already out there.

The problem is that management can't find proof that the project is attractive or realistic, neither internally inside the company nor externally on the market. That's obvious. Deductive or inductive reasoning is totally irrelevant in this situation. It's impossible to assess the risk, and therefore management will start finding a more down-to-earth and realistic idea (probably without any pioneering or revenue-enhancing effect) increasingly attractive.

Realism is the bottom line's best friend when it's time to implement and budget the development projects. But when you are talking about development of ideas that can retain or expand the company's brand value realism puts a spanner in the wheel.

But by being unmotivated and unwilling to explore what may at first glance seem difficult or unrealistic, the company cuts itself off from pursuing all the ideas and solutions that may arise in connection with the thoughts that seem hard to realize.

It's essential to mentally distinguish between *development* and *implementation*. Only then is it possible to stop thinking "realistically" and start thinking "unrealistically" in the creative development processes.

"Yes we can" is a mantra of the imagination and ought to be the only acceptable approach in your company when you're going to develop and find new and previously neglected avenues for the company's brands and the company itself.

When you make a conscious attempt to *conquer* realism you move boundaries which, consciously or unconsciously, you have set for yourself; only then will there be an opportunity to create new, differentiated, attention-grabbing and valuable solutions for the company and its brands.

First define the objective. The goal always controls the means and also those who in principle are in control of the ideas that are being invented. Define the most “unrealistic” objective for your development project you can think of and see what happens. Automatically you’ll be forced to create ideas and solutions that had never before entered your realistic universe.

What at first glance can seem to be unrealistic solutions also tend to be the most unique ideas that add the greatest value for the consumers – and hence have the greatest impact on the company’s brands.

Once you have abandoned your pursuit of the “unrealistic” objectives with its “unrealistic” ideas, then you can start thinking realistically once again. Trust me, the objectives and ideas that used to appear “unrealistic” will, in some adapted form, start to appear more realistic and feasible. Once you’ve stopped thinking of something new, once you have drained your brain and recharged your mental resources, you can start thinking systematically and realistically once again.

Stop thinking in terms of realism, i.e. existing and predictable possibilities (as long as you are in the creative development mode). Don’t cut yourself off from the most profitable ideas for your brands. Start thinking unrealistically.

Say it aloud: “Yes we can.”

Something old in exchange for something new

It is, in fact, natural and in keeping with human nature to cling on to all that we have created and invested time and money in. Conservatism drives us and drives business leaders to automatically stick to the company’s history, identity, culture, and behavior.

The company and its brands must be a mirror image of the present, picture-perfect masterpiece.

That’s a nice feeling, of course. Everything is as it should be. No major changes, just minor adjustments. We are what we want to be; we do what we can and what we are best at; what we have to do.

The need for self-confirmation and the fear of the new and the unknown often limits objectivity as well as curiosity, innovation, and self-sacrifice on the part of the leaders. Therefore, brand identity and behavior is retained without a critical assessment of whether the current form and value will be attractive, competitive, and profitable both today and tomorrow, which can be catastrophic when the powerful and disloyal consumers are scrutinizing your brand’s value and advantages, day in and day out.

The interaction between conservatism and self-righteousness often results in disregard for the opportunities and the solutions that mean sacrificing some of our existing identity and behavior. We have to admit that something can be done differently and should have been done differently in the company.

But one good turn deserves another

If you want something new and valuable you'll have to sacrifice some of the old and maybe worthless. It's not a matter of mindlessly clinging on to existing processes, nor is it a matter of automatically "throwing the baby out with the bathwater." You have to constantly innovate, keep an open, objective, and visionary mind towards the fundamental values of your company and brand identity, towards development and new initiatives.

If you agree, for a moment, to sacrifice some of your company's existing identity and behavior, what new fundamental identity and what new brand activities do you see?

Supposing you sacrifice some of what you have today, what solutions are there? If you strip away some of the old, both in a physical and a figurative sense, or both, what new value and valuable solutions can take its place?

Just because you engage in the thought experiment of discarding some of the old, you don't have to throw the brand's history and the existing product program on the scrapheap. You have merely opened your mind and established a new mental highway for new visions and solutions, which may be exactly the solutions your company needs to secure a profitable future.

Look in the mirror

Excuses, excuses...

It's always possible to find an external explanation for why the company's brand value and attractiveness is on the decline.

We rarely look inward to find the answer for our waning efforts. We humans have a tendency to be too good to ourselves when applying the wisdom of hindsight. We evaluate our importance, level, and efforts considerably more positively than the outside world. Most people have lost their objectivity when it comes to themselves.

That same self-aggrandisement and lack of objectivity may become a pitfall when you have to establish your new, much more creative company with a license to operate the profitable, explosive brands.

The top executive will say that lack of courage, competencies, motivation and initiative among the employees is the reason why the company lacks creativity and innovation. But that statement only maintains your own perfect image of yourself as top leader, and it eliminates the opportunity to find a solution to the biggest challenge

your company will face in the transparent, turbulent and user-dominated surplus society.

Look in the mirror, rediscover your own creative soul, (re)energize creativity, and push yourself to the limit instead of just pushing everyone else. The profit-oriented creative company can't become a reality without you being on the creative peak.

Meet the new CEO

Announcement to the company's Creative Executive Officer

The way I see it, there's only one effective way to launch creativity in your company in a profit-oriented manner. As the chief executive of the company, you have to be in the forefront of the creative revolution. You are the creative head of the company. You, the executives, and the managers have to initiate business creativity.

Your managers, mid-level managers and employees study and decode your priorities and actions down to the smallest detail. They constantly try to figure out what you and the company wants from them, and they observe you, your personality, and your behavior. As the head of the organization, you have an enormous power and influence. You and your actions set the standard for the actions and priorities of the company. Your managers and your employees are inspired by and copy you down to the minutest details, for no other reason than to live up to your standard and the company's expectations.

That means that the employees' perception of the company's expectations of their effort and behavior won't change at all unless you yourself change your creative priorities and actions. Your own changed awareness and behavior as the top leader is the only thing that can affect the employees' attention and modify their behavior.

If your intention is to increase creativity up and down the organization (and it is, since that's the direct road to success) there is simply no alternative but to stand up and march in the forefront. It's you who have to initiate and foster creativity through your own creative effort, power, and behavior as the top leader.

All the stuff that belongs to the left brain – the long written strategies, regulations with rules of behavior, request memos, lots of talk, meetings, creative camps and external consultants – has no effect whatsoever as long as you stay in your masculine, conservative director's chair and practice business-as-usual with your left brain as your own best friend.

What you do, others will do, most likely. If you talk about creativity more than you act, others will do the same. If you only half-heartedly enter the creative space and only pretend to be working on improved creativity in your organization, then the whole organization will predictably do the same. The employees will chat about the new initiatives, and then they will follow your example, continue doing what they have always done.

You yourself has to start studying, respecting, and practising creativity. It can't be done half-heartedly, with restraint, or with a limited amount of energy. It can only be done as a transformation, whole-heartedly, and well-intentioned. If that's your approach they are sure to follow you into the land of opportunities.

It goes without saying, that the "leader DNA" of the future is as multi-faceted and holistic as the assignment of leading and managing the companies in the transparent and turbulent user-dominated surplus society. The companies have to be administred, of course, but your administrative competencies are much less important compared to the skills needed to meet the challenges of the self-staging, attention-seeking, professional, disloyal, and fast-moving consumers – consumers who are also your employees with the exact same characteristics as other consumers.

Given that the brand can lose its value in record time, the role of the top leader becomes even more crucial for the future of the company. Unless the chief executive is capable of initiating and motivating the constant redevelopment of the fundamental identity and market-related activities of the brand, the company will be unable to attract consumer or competent employees, and it won't be able to retain the brand value and hence the basic market capitalization. Future recruitment of top managers will be a matter of only getting one shot at it, compared to the options of the past, which were more a question of "trial and error." Recruiting leaders with a DNA profile of the past, rather than of the future can be a disaster.

The future leaders' DNA profile will most likely include the ability to promote a high creative level in the company, although that's not the only competency required by any means. I recommend that you start by changing the title on your business card to Creative Executive Officer indicating what your primary concern for the company is right now.

What projects are you participating in?

The most important driver of creativity for your company's employees is your own active participation and interest in the business-creative work; it's also the strongest indicator of your new approach to the job as top leader. If you yourself spend time questioning the status quo and have the courage to explore the unknown, and if you regularly display an offensive approach to the fundamental identity of the brand and daily involve yourself in the effort to create new, valuable differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities you will cultivate the same fearless and offensive creative effort in your employees.

What do you think Steve Jobs spent his time on when he was head of Apple? Spreadsheets or new products and business opportunities?

The active involvement of the top executive in the business-creative work is not without pitfalls, however. If your background is 25 years of number crunching, systematizing, and budget cuts and you think it's your duty to take over the creative respon-

sibility by transferring your ideas and opinions, as well as your husband's or wife's taste to the company's creative work, then you are well on the way to shutting down the company. If you don't have a creative or product-oriented background like Steve Jobs you have to settle for a more indirect involvement in the business-creative work, at least until you have the necessary experience.

Top leadership of creativity

Your own personality, behavior and priorities as the top leader is crucial in order to be able to enhance creativity in the company, but as the new Creative Executive Officer your role is not only to be at the forefront and initiate business creativity at the top.

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You also have to make sure that the employees follow suit as the creative bottom of the company, which must develop and implement the most important ideas in order to retain and expand the brand value at a more detailed and implementing level.

You are therefore tasked with making sure that the employees have a strong motivation for promoting creativity, creating the suitable framework for development of creativity, organizing the creative work as effectively as possibly in terms of profit, and also recruiting and training the most creative employees.

That's what I call top leadership of creativity.

In the profit-oriented creative company, the creative top and the creative bottom work side by side on the same offensive approach to developing the brand's fundamental identity; to increase the frequency of valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities; and to strengthen the company's business in every conceivable way. The result is a brand that's capable of surfing optimally with the consumers in the spirit of the time; a company that knows how to simultaneously retain, expand and capitalize on the brand value in the transparent and turbulent, user-dominated surplus society. The transparency, turbulence, user-dominance, and surplus are not going to go away. The question is, are you and your company?

Here's how you guarantee the strongest motivation for creativity

Get started on the product campaign

When it comes to motivating your employees to promote creativity the company's bottom line is definitely the weakest hand.

The employees need to fight for a cause that is passionate, much more meaningful, and has more self-expressive advantages than the company's bottom line can provide.

Respect and passion for the company's product area and for the users of the brand products is a much stronger driver of creativity than the value of the executives' stock options.

Seeing that the company's products make a difference, are celebrated, and are loved by users all over the world creates passion and self-expressive advantages for the employees who are part of the development and delivery of this value. The product contest is deeply meaningful for the employees and a strong motivation to continue the creative work and still be making a difference in the world.

Respect and passion for your brand's product area and the users of the brand create the necessary focus on and motivation for the employees to promote creativity. The performance of your brand and your employees' pride and motivation will peak when the brand successfully delivers the differentiated, attention-grabbing and valuable new products and other brand activities to the consumers.

All over the world Apple worshippers and super fans meet over cheap pizza and cold beer when, time and again, Apple launches innovative products at its trade shows. These events are streamed on the Internet, and every year produces millions of loyal Apple super fans; fans in search of new functionalities and new striking symbols to use in their self-staging. The constant supply of new and differentiated consumer value is what leaves the competition in the dust and starts Apple fan groups all over the world.

There are countless magazines, websites and blogs that follow Apple closely. MacRumors.com, Appleinsider.com, Macworld.com, Malife.com, CultofMac.com, MacUpdate.com, Appleare.com and Ipodiphoneipadimac.blogspot.com are just a small but significant selection of media, where the Apple brand is celebrated by its users, and they contribute to motivating Apple employees to keep making a difference.

The quarterly earnings reports strangle creativity

If the respect and passion for the products and the consumers are best friends of creativity, the company's bottom line is its most dangerous enemy in the short term.

Most companies and top executives are slaves of the short-term bottom line. That creates very difficult conditions for the necessary, more dynamic approach to development and market capitalization of the future in those companies. Increased creativity and development efforts will initially have a negative effect on the bottom line, lower quarterly earnings, and hence have negative consequences for the company's management.

But lost revenue in connection with the short-term financial perspective is a minor problem associated with the more long-term investment in the expansion of the brand value.

The biggest problem is the risk the company is running by only capitalizing on the current value of the brand and neglecting making constant investments in retaining or expanding the brand value. When top executives keep their eyes glued to the market capitalization and the quarterly earnings, the company's brand has a high risk of getting out of sync with the needs of the consumers in the transparent and turbulent user-dominated surplus society and lose its attractiveness,

The short-sighted focus on the bottom line constantly plays tricks on the companies. As part of the creative development processes the companies lose the necessary focus on the consumers and the overall objective, i.e. retaining or expanding the brand value. Paradoxically, the quarterly earnings focus is blocking the development of the brand value that would be able to ensure substantial revenue over the medium or long term.

The next quarterly earnings report is constantly in the back of the minds of top management. Therefore they need to quickly convert creativity into innovation projects that can be implemented and managed on a spreadsheet. Does the factory have the capacity to produce it? Is the organization prepared? Do we have sales agreements in place? How cheaply can this be done? Those are the questions, and in the process it's easy to lose the focus on whether the new product is actually valuable for the consumers and sufficiently differentiated from the competitors' products to possibly attract attention and increase the attractiveness.

Most companies are simply incapable of switching the focus from themselves and their bottom line in the short term. Such a mindset prevents management from concentrating on the consumers' needs and initiating the creativity that can reestablish the fundamental brand identity or generate the valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities.

Companies like Apple and Google are founded and operated by leaders who first and foremost are proud product fanatics and in most cases also passionate users of their own products.

Their pride and motivation are tied to their products' performance, rather than to the short-term bottom line. Developing "the next big thing" and delivering new and differentiated value to the consumers, including themselves, is what drives them, and, believe it or not, this is what makes those companies the most profitable.

When Steve Jobs returned to Apple at the end of 1996 he had no doubt what had led Apple to the brink of bankruptcy while he was away from the company.

"My passion has been to build an enduring company where people were motivated to make great products. The products, not the profits, were the motivation. Sculley (former Apple executive) flipped these priorities to where the goal was to make money. It's a subtle difference, but it ends up meaning everything."

Job's vision was clear: make the very best products that people will love to use; then good business will follow. A narrowly-focused emphasis on the product was going to lead Apple to success. Under Steve Jobs, Apple became the most profitable and reputable company in the world, without focusing solely on profit, and by concentrating on creating "really great products", combined, however, with a balanced focus on company profit. "Think Different" and "Think Profit."

The greatest creators of new and differentiated consumer value possess a kind of “value honesty,” in which the development work is 100 % focused on creating added value for the consumers and not on what fits into the production schedule.

If your goal is to establish the necessary – and very profitable – level of creativity in your company, you need to inoculate it with a large dose of “value honesty” driven by respect and passion for the products and for the consumers. Only then will you be able to get a relaxed and constructive relationship to what keeps a stranglehold on creativity in your company – the quarterly earnings.

Close the factory and open your mind

As your company’s new Creative Executive Officer you have to work out the sequence in the fundamental business model and your company’s strategy.

You have to include the products and the consumers as main players in the company’s strategy. Respect and passion for production and for the consumers are the most important drivers of creativity in your company – and hence the expansion of the brand value and the company’s earnings capacity.

If you keep investing all your employees’ as well as your own mental resources in filling the factory’s production capacity, copying the competition, pushing sales and cutting costs so that, at a minimum, you will match last year’s quarterly earnings results for the same period, you lose the opportunity to create the exceptionally profitable company, and you may jeopardize the very existence of the company much faster than you expect.

You have to reduce your company’s inventory and mentally let go of the Excel program, and you have to open your own and your employees’ hearts and minds to the new profitable solutions presented by creativity.

This is how you “ignite” the business creator

In a world where job function, place of work, and professional performance is an integral part of people’s all-engrossing self-staging, the employees are obviously extremely motivated to take part in the company’s development work,

Being asked by management to help solve the company’s creative challenges is a clear signal that it considers you, the employee, as sufficiently competent to solve an important problem. Besides, the creative challenges are an opportunity to achieve personal success and reap huge self-expressive benefits as one of the company’s creative heroes. If, in addition, the development assignments present the opportunity to develop new and differentiated value for people who really need it, the creative work can become one of the most meaningful activities in the employee’s life.

In other words, the employees’ inner business creator is ready to be ignited.

As the creative head of your company, you have every opportunity to motivate your employees to make the necessary creative effort. In order to do that, you have to up-prioritize the development assignments for each employee and clearly communicate your expectations regarding his or her creative efforts. Then the employees will know that their creative efforts are appreciated and what type of barrier-breaking creativity makes you happy, content, and not least generous. At the same time you have to build a culture that credits, rewards and promotes the employees who deliver the most impressive creative performances. The employees must be made aware that they'll get what they deserve, once they have made a competent and persistent creative effort.

Google has a reputation as the official world champion in pampering their employees. But apart from a whole arsenal of employee benefits and fringe benefits, Google also rewards and recognizes their employees' efforts very directly. For example software engineers are paid according to the importance of their project. Conversely, if you are working on a minor project which ends up being of great importance, you will undoubtedly be rewarded accordingly. In addition, Google employees who have made exceptional efforts or have been involved in successful projects receive many types of awards, from gift certificates and free massage, to large bonuses and Google stock.

Google has managed to create a business culture where professional and collegial respect is as important as the company's recognition. This culture of recognition is widely promoted when, once a quarter, Google's employees meet and present all the completed projects. Pictures and names of the teams behind the projects accompany the project presentation, typically to standing ovation. Imagining such a recognition from your colleagues can give the employees goosebumps.

Here's how you create the proper mental framework for creativity

Creative freedom

To enable the employees to carry their new creative responsibility the company needs to pair the new challenges with a mental framework inside which employees can work on their creative assignments in the most optimal fashion.

The employees need the mental freedom to escape from the existing solutions and pursue the unknown where the new brand value may be. They also need courage to expore, propose and test the immediately unthinkable but also very differentiated solutions. You won't find the profitable maybe's except on the border to the unknown and the unthinkable.

It's the employees' independence that can release the creativity and ensure the ability and the courage to cross the border from the well-known and immediately logical solutions. The new and valuably differentiated brand activities that break with market conventions will only see the light of day through independent thinking.

If you remove the independence you remove the employees' ability to utilize the creative freedom the company provides.

The employees' independent thinking and creativity are greatly hampered if they have to look behind them and follow established rules of work. If you, the top leader, try to control the employees' creative effort in order to ensure that they do the work you think they should be doing using as few resources as possible, then the ideas you get back will have your own limited creative level as the lowest common denominator.

Some companies (and executives) simply don't understand this new paradigm. They think people are just at work. If that's their mindset, then they get "workers." Systems, rules, control, and your dominance totally eliminate independence and strangle creativity.

You have to replace authority with autonomy. It's not as if you have to accept boundless abandon, anarchy or out-of-control development budgets. Creative freedom only means that the employees can work precisely the way they prefer in order to contribute to the company's overall objectives. The type of autonomy you promote is creative freedom with responsibility.

Google is world famous for its 20 % time policy. That doesn't mean that the employees work on their own projects one day a week. It's not as rigid as that. Rather, after working on scheduled projects for a long stretch of time, they work on projects that aren't necessarily in their job descriptions. They can use the time to develop something new, or if they see something that's broken they can use the time to fix it. Norm-driven left brainers might call it 20 % dead time, but that's a shallow assessment. Take a second look and go a bit deeper. When Google launches its most successful products it turns out that approximately 50 % of the innovations come from the 20 % time off. G-mail and Google News are illustrious examples, in my mind, of the value of giving the employees the necessary creative freedom.

The developers at Google are allowed to change teams and projects as often as they wish, which greatly increases the creative freedom. They just call Google's internal movers; then they're off to the next team/project. In addition, there's a stated philosophy not to dictate to the developers what projects they must work on. Preferably they should choose projects/teams they are interested in and which match their competencies.

Send fear packing

Undoubtedly there'll be some risk involved when you give your employees the creative freedom and strong motivation to challenge the boundaries of the company's internal organizational development or externally present a challenge to the company's brands,

Granted, there may be some risk when employees on the creative bottom of the company insist on creating and implementing initiatives which they believe will give the company or the consumers something they did not have before, and/or which the competition does not provide. There is another risk, of course, that, contrary to expectation, consumers are not excited about the new product and competitors are

gloating that you have nothing to show for all your development spending on the bottom of the quarterly earnings sheet.

But nothing is risk-free

Attempting to minimize the risk by repeating the brand identity or your own or other people's former successes is not a viable alternative at all to running the business-creative risk. The professional consumers won't give reproductions of your brand a second look. What a few years ago was described as "playing it safe" is now one of the most risky things you can do to your brands and to your company. As the chief executive of the company, you have to send fear packing and learn to embrace the inherent risk in business-creative work.

The top leader's job is not to try and avert creative risk (that's only possible in a fantasy world, not in the real world); rather his role is to minimize fear and promote courage; the courage to build up the employees' capacity and ability in their creative work to get on with it and continue the creative work, even though the first try was unsuccessful.

The first rule in the fearless approach to creative work is to accept that mistakes are inevitable and that mistakes do not automatically lead to more mistakes but constitute a valuable source of learning, which is the first step towards being able to do it differently and successfully at the next try.

The genuine mistakes

If you and your employees operate the business and its brands on a cocktail of fear and reactionary simple repetitions the likelihood that you will be able to retain and expand the brand's value is virtually non-existent. It's like believing you can win a medal at OL by trying not to be injured.

You have to promote business creativity in order to win, not to avoid losing. You have to accept and embrace the risk of speedy, valuable differentiation of the company's brands. You have to build up courage to make genuine mistakes, the mistakes that happen once in a while in the uncompromising pursuit of the profitable maybe's, and you have to stop making the fatal and predictable mistakes related to the fear of losing.

It's vital that you establish a winning mentality in your business creativity. The employees have to do whatever it takes to pursue the great and crucial ideas in order to win for your brands. The employees need to have a relaxed and deliberate attitude to making mistakes, but only when it comes to the creative development work of the organization and its products, of course. The creative 'trial and error' approach should not be an experiment when the products have to be delivered on time to at the receiver's address. First and foremost, the employees should concentrate on and be motivated for developing the new and differentiated consumer value, which not only makes the company's brands attractive and super-profitable, but also define their

own roles as key employees in the company. In the employees' mental state mistakes have to be a logical, welcome and accepted part of trying to win the company's creative competition on all fronts.

Not only should the head of the company have the same fearless approach to the business-creative work, but he or she should also ensure and clearly state his position that the employees will be handsomely rewarded for embarking on courageous and targeted business-creative initiatives, and that there are no internal consequences of making mistakes in the process.

Here's how you organize the business creativity

Creativity for all

Creativity is a fundamental competency that is applicable in all the work functions in the company, irrespective of whether that function is development or market capitalization. Creativity enables the company's workforce to develop the profitable maybe's which is this book primarily means recreating the fundamental brand identity and develop the new valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities at a high speed.

Creativity has to be applied in all corners of the organization, also internally. It should develop new systems and processes for administration, production, control and logistics. It should be integrated into the resources and unite the organization around a common goal. Creativity is not just an effective means to expanding revenues, but also to cutting costs. The Spanish fashion company Zara is a brilliant example of this approach.

Zara has revolutionized the design process. Most fashion companies are trend-spotting; product design and "creative direction" are centralized tasks executed by a small number of key employees. At Zara the design process has been decentralized to 200 designers at the headquarters in Coruna, who annually design more than 20,000 styles in close collaboration with the company's product, sales, and marketing personnel. Via advanced PDAs directly to the people in charge of marketing, associates in the company's stores not only submit information about what merchandise sells best, but also their private observations of trends and attitudes based on their encounter with the store's customers.

The employees in charge of marketing are physically in the same location as the designers and can thus communicate and act on the market information immediately. The result is that the production time from inspiration to the arrival of the finished products in the stores has been reduced to approx. two weeks. Zara's global distribution center is in Spain, from where 1,700 pieces of clothing valued at 2.5 million are distributed to 78 countries every week. At the distribution center there's a clear rule that no piece of merchandise will stay more than 72 hours in the center before it's shipped to Zara's stores. This presents an obvious advantage in the turbulent surplus society, where slow design production and distribution processes risk making the

products obsolete based on outdated trends. By strengthening innovation in design logic, Zara has established some outstanding competitive advantages.

Creativity is a core competency for the entire workforce in the companies of the future, irrespective of whether the employees' primary focus is on retention or expansion of the brand value, on revenue increases, or cost minimization, and creativity has to be organized so that it reaches all relevant employees, which means everyone, of course. Creative thinking is no longer for the few selected employees.

The creative projects

Creativity is a relevant competency for the entire workforce irrespective of their place in the organization, but obviously that doesn't mean that creativity plays an equally important role in all functions in all assignments. Creativity is an essential means of thinking and creating something new all the time.

Creative freedom is relevant in order to release the profitable maybe's of valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities, but that doesn't mean that the relationship between development efforts and market capitalization efforts cannot be strictly controlled.

The untenable balance between value creation and market capitalization characteristic of the companies of the past is an example of the unintelligent and sub-optimal approach to the efforts of maximizing the companies' profitability. The lack of appreciation of brand value as the basic foundation of revenue as well as the creative effort is a shocking admission of failure for the conservative, fear-driven and quarterly-profit-result-fixated top leader.

Companies of the future are forced to use creativity as targeted and as effectively as possible. Recreation of the fundamental brand value and development of new, valuably differentiated brand activities should be considered an ongoing activity, which has to be planned and organized like all essential tasks in the company. Systematizing creativity may sound as a limitation, but it's the exact opposite.

The awareness of the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the brand as the fundamental criterion for creativity means that the creative work can be organized as a continuous line of clearly defined development projects. It's impossible to budget the projects precisely, but on the other hand this approach presents a distinct guideline (the valuable differentiation of the brand) for evaluating and completing the creative work as soon as the solutions match the criteria.

That's the way the profit-oriented creative company should think and operate.

Explosive value development

The company's creative projects have to be driven to completion at a rapid pace. The speedy value development not only decreases the company's development costs but

also enables the company to drive the explosive brands as effectively and as competently as possible.

In the following I'll present 10 principles for explosive value development which may contribute to increasing the speed of creative projects in your company and ensure a far more cost-effective development process than the ordinary, lengthy, slow, "correct," and safe process, which makes the fatal mistake of trying to validate the future solutions based on the false facts of the past, rather than pursuing the profitable maybe's.

1. Don't forget that the bottom line is the goal of development. The company cannot capitalize on the development work until the fundamental brand identity has been recreated and the new valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities have been implemented on the market and had its value-creating effect on the brand.
2. Don't lengthen the creative process by describing, debating and optimizing the details. It takes too long and you may lose your excitement, the dynamics, and the spontaneous creativity.
3. Apply your intuition and empathy rather than complicated evaluation models. They will not limit your risk anyway; neither will scientific tests and verdicts from consumers. So use your intuition and empathy; your own abilities are superior, faster and more honest.
4. Make the project hands-on and tangible as soon as possible. Create visualizations, wordings, and mock-ups of your ideas as soon as feasible, so that empathy gets something concrete to relate to.
5. Evaluate the economic opportunities of the project as early as possible. Forget the intricate spreadsheets with all sorts of conditions which may be obsolete as soon as they are entered. Use simple and sensible evaluations of the value of the project and the subsequent opportunities for market capitalization as early in the process as possible.
6. Subject the fundamental idea to an acid test as soon as you can. Don't be blinded or confused by encouraging or discouraging details. Identify the core of the project as fast as you can and make sure it delivers the new and differentiated value that attracts the market.
7. Get rid of weak and worthless projects as fast as possible in the process. In order to be able to create at a rapid pace, you should be prepared to cut with a heavy hand. By hanging on to weak and worthless development projects you miss the opportunity to pursue new and more effective ideas.
8. Let the projects meet the real world as soon as possible in its imperfect BETA version. Let the world see the "beast" right away. There is no better test than trying out the "real" solution in the real world.

9. Let the consumers and the outside world take part in the creation. The consumers cannot tell you what to develop. But they are the users of your brand, and they can give you valuable feedback and supplement your suggestions.
10. Transfer the idea to the employees who are most experienced in implementing the creative bottom as soon as you are certain that the idea lives up to the goal of contributing valuable differentiation. Transfer it from the creative team to the project managers. so that the idea can be implemented and capitalized before it becomes outdated in the turbulent society. The ideas are not the creative employees' "babies;" they are the result of their creative efforts. Make sure the creative team moves on to the next projects where they can apply their core competencies within the field of development.

Recruitment and training of the business-creative employees

The pitfalls of take-away creativity

If your company lacks the necessary business creativity to drive your brands and ensure a more dynamic approach to the fundamental business model, it's tempting to procure the missing skills from outside. The transformation from the conservative company to the profit-oriented creative company can seem enormous and impossible to implement.

Market analysis, innovation, creativity, and design have become a gigantic industry of take-away creativity specializing in delivering exactly what your company needs right now.

But if you decide to outsource your creative tasks to external experts in everything from analysis to innovation and hence restrict your company's independent effort to the familiar business disciplines such as production, logistics, control, sales and service – areas that you master – you are gambling with the future of your company. Here are the reasons why.

First of all, the externally generated ideas have not been developed on you company's stony ground. The external experts don't have a deep insight, appreciation and respect for where you came from and for the potential of your company. The success of the external experts is usually closely linked to the desire to create something that will contribute to *their* creative competencies rather than what is optimal for your brand creativity. You risk being pulled in directions which have not been acid-tested and properly thought through when it comes to your company's brands, in particular if you end up in a type of collaboration where the consultants are "masters of creativity" because you lack opinions and competencies to participate actively in the process. One option is you close your eyes and trust that what the experts propose is the right thing to do, even though it doesn't feel right. The other option is that you put the brakes on and give a brief that can only produce a copy of what you already have – a simple repetition of your own or the competitors' latest success, which will make no positive difference for the consumer and hence won't retain or expand your company's brand value.

Secondly, the external creative consultants are mostly interested in their own bottom line, which is heavily dependent on the invoicing schedule you have agreed to, as well as retaining a customer relationship. The larger and more complex the assignments, the better for the external consultants' bottom line. When the client is satisfied, even it means playing up to him and presenting the solution they think will sell with him (but not necessarily in the stores), then it's good for the consultants' bottom line. This may sound as an untenable situation for the consultancy industry, but in my opinion it's still the prevailing trend, an "infection" which everyone who has set foot inside the creative consultancy business will recognize.

Finally, all other things being equal, the development process will always be lengthier when external consultants first have to be briefed and come to understand your company's situation, and then allocate their creative resources as effectively as possible to fit into your schedule and their jobs for other clients. You don't have time to wait for external consultants to get your company and its opportunities under their skin, get started on the project, and present "realistic and saleable" ideas in a super-smart visual presentation, which you will then have to consider, initiate and implement in your company. The consumers don't wait for you and the consultants to be ready with your "latest" product; they have surfed on on the next wave carrying an armful of other crisp brands.

The take-away creativity is dangling in front of your like a tempting apple in Eden, but the question is whether it's really an option to outsource your entire business creativity, from A to Z, in order to achieve optimal results.

I don't want to sound like an old curmudgeon slinging dirt on my own colleagues. Consultancy firms like IDEO have done a lot of good for many companies. The external inspiration is always welcome. It may be able to kickstart, open your eyes, and, yes, inspire. But that's about it. And, of course, externally driven business creativity is better than none.

But I'm convinced that unless creativity is initiated and devised from the bottom of your company's culture, there's little chance that it will be both progressive and achievable and thus become a successful innovation for your company. A precondition for getting optimal benefit from external sparring partners –professional experts as well as passionate and competent users of your brand – is a certain level of business-creativity within your business. If your company has no market empathy or business creativity whatsoever it will never be able to extract the highest level of creativity from the highly-paid external consultants.

We are business-creative "artists" who need inspiration, motivation and encouragement from a like-minded CEO, even though we charge princely sums for our services. Similarly, the uncreative company will never succeed in engaging and activating its customers and users in a fruitful round of co-creation. Also, we consumers and buyers only want to work with companies that we respect for their impressive business skills.

Recruitment, challenge and training of the fearless business-creative winner types

If you keep recruiting macho MBAs (like yourself) who are searching for future solutions among the false data of the past it's obvious that you won't succeed in establishing the required level of business creativity and a more dynamic approach to developing and capitalizing on the brand value. If you want to restore the balance between development and market capitalization you have to restore the balance between two human resources branches in your company – the development-oriented and the market-capitalizing branch.

As head of the company, one of your most important jobs is then to recruit, challenge, and train more of the fearless business-creative winner types, those you cannot control, dominate or manage in the traditional sense. You have to invite the strongest and most creative candidates to join your business. They can ensure the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of your brands in a short amount of time. They can and they will deliver a more dynamic approach to the fundamental business model, maximize profit, and guarantee the survival of the business in the turbulent surplus society.

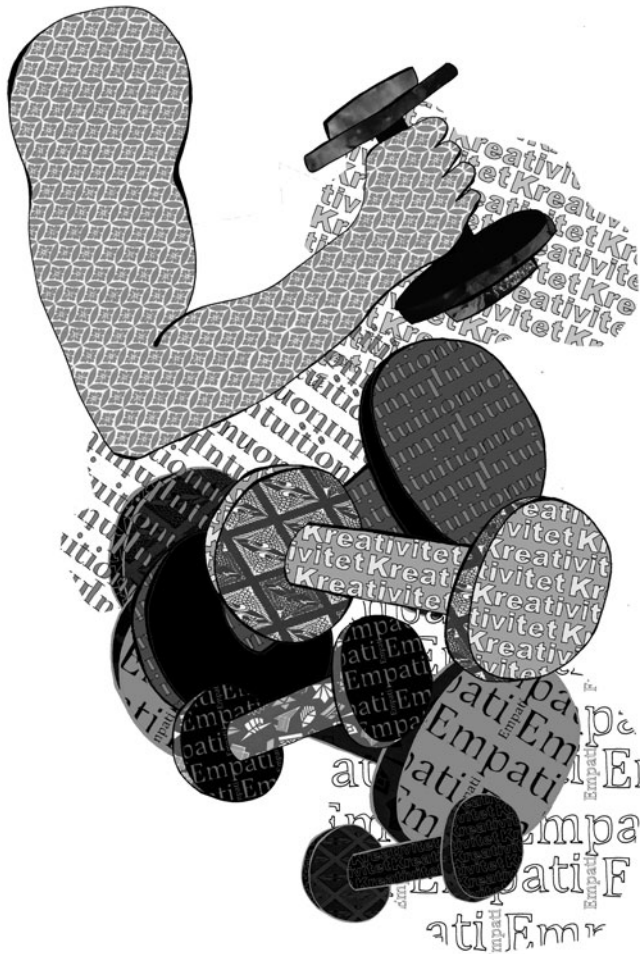
As the new Creative Executive Officer of the company you are tasked with being the master coach of business creativity, the one who can attract and train creative top performers – a demanding job which demands an exceptional effort from a conservative company.

My suggestion is to initiate a targeted performance development of your employees' business creativity following the same principles that enable the most accomplished artists and athletes in the world to lift their performance from ordinary to outstanding. It's time to start working with high-performance business creativity. In the profit-oriented creative company, creativity is not a universal means, but a highly-prioritized means with a vital "performance" to reach the company's financial objectives.

CHAPTER

4 High Performance Business Creativity >>

Training in business creativity for the future





Wide-ranging and vital changes are needed in your company over the next few years in order to keep up with the persistent redevelopment of the explosive brands that will attract and retain the professional, disloyal, and fast-moving consumers. Brand surfing will be your company's answer to the ultimate extreme sport – a demanding, but profitable discipline.

Your employees' as well as your own competencies will be in the center of business creativity, in the "eye of the storm." Unless you and your employees possess the intuition and empathy to sense when it's time to recreate the fundamental brand value and which brand activities are needed in order to create value for the consumers – and beat the competition – and unless you are capable of creating and implementing the new brand identity and valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities at a rapid pace, your company will have a hard time in the transparent, turbulent and user-dominated surplus society into which we are already headed.

It will take time for you, in your new role as the company's Creative Executive Officer, to implement the creative revolution. The transformation from a conservative company of the past to the more creative company with a license to operate the explosive and profitable brands takes time. The most important job for you, as the creative leader and front runner, is to improve your own and your employees' business-creative competencies here and now – before it's too late. Neither consumers, employees, competitors, nor the bank are willing to wait until you, at your leisure, through small annual incremental organizational changes, complete the creative revolution in your company. The time to improve the company's business-creative competencies is now, for you need them already tomorrow.

Don't underestimate the task that lies ahead. It's not easy to improve your employees' as well as your own business-creative competencies when the concept of "Brand and Business Management as usual" is stuck in your head, in the culture, and in everyday life. First and foremost, if you're going to succeed in meeting the greatest and most important challenges in the turbulent surplus society, you have to adjust your own view of the fundamental nature of creativity. It's not an easy journey; it will challenge your own and your employees' consciousness and identity, but at the same time it's exciting, fun and rewarding.

The genetics of business creativity

The cliché about innate creative talent

Contrary to the belief of many, a high creative level within any discipline – whether it's music, art or business – is not an innate talent.

Mozart, Picasso, The Beatles and Steve Jobs were not born with the ability to break conventions and set new standards in their respective fields. In the book *Genius Explained* Dr. Michael Howe estimates that Mozart had 3,500 music lessons with his father before the age of six, a father who was a top composer and a status as one of the most progressive musical instructors of the time, of course. Undoubtedly, Mozart had an ear for music and a remarkable memory, but the most important explanation of Mozart's early success is that his father sent him to an intensive training camp when he was three years old. As a 5-year-old he played the harpsichord (a piano-like instrument) and shortly afterwards he learned to play the violin and the organ – and also learned to compose music. His piano concerto No. 9, composed when Mozart was just 21, is hailed as one of his greatest master pieces. Most people are amazed that a 21-year-old could compose such a consummate piece of music. But they forget that at that time Mozart had had 18 years of intensive musical training.

History repeats itself with Pablo Picasso, who at the age of 13 was accepted to the Art School in Barcelona, and who had been trained by his father (a professor at the Art School) since he could say "piz, piz" – paint brush in Spanish baby language. But Picasso was 26 before he got his breakthrough as the "midwife" of cubism with the painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)* (the young girls from Avignon). This is another example that the prerequisite for great creative accomplishments are very early competent and intensive training.

The Beatles started playing together in 1957. After several years as a struggling band in small clubs in Liverpool, they had the opportunity to play at various clubs in Hamburg in 1960. The first gig was at a strip club in Hamburg's red-light district, where they played sets of six hours non-stop – "Eight days a week." These were years of intensive training. As early as 1960, The Beatles played more than 400 concerts – i.e. more than one concert a day. In January 1964, seven years after their first jam session, the song "I want to hold your hand" shot right to the top of the American hit list. At that time, John, Paul, George and Ringo had had intensive training, with more

than 1,200 performances. That's far more than most contemporary bands achieve in their entire career. Many years later John Lennon talked about the strenuous years of training, "We got better and got more confidence. We couldn't help it with all the experience playing all night long. . . we had to play for eight hours, so we really had to find a new way of playing." Many people believe that The Beatles reached their artistic climax in 1967-68 with "Sergeant Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band" and the "White Album;" at that time the Beatles had been training together intensively for 10 years.

Whether Michael Jackson's abilities as a singer, dancer and entertainer are due to "nature" or "nurture" has been the subject of much debate, since the six-year old captured the stage and people's hearts in The Jackson Five. There is no doubt that Michael Jackson's perpetually controlling father Joe Jackson played an important role in the development of Michael's talent, for better or for worse. Joe Jackson was a former musician himself, and when he discovered his children's talent for music, the ruthless pace started, which included physical punishment with a belt, if the Jackson brothers were out of tune or played a wrong note. At the same time, Joe Jackson managed to create a highly competitive culture within The Jackson Five, which kept all members of the group on their toes and made them do their very best at every rehearsal and performance. Joe Jackson's relentless and targeted training of Michael gave him discipline and backbone in his career as a soloist. The road to fame and success went through consistent and intensive training. Michael Jackson was an absolute perfectionist, and everyone who tried to work with him experienced his persistent, tireless, and targeted effort to produce the perfect result. Whether he was in the studio or was rehearsing for a concert, a 10-hour working day was not unusual for Michael Jackson. A lifelong pace – instilled by his father and by himself – made him one of the world's greatest artists. Michael Jackson own reflection, "I was a veteran before I was a teenager" explains everything.

Steve Jobs was a hippie hustler and a college dropout from Reed College in Portland, Oregon, who tended to be in constant arrogant and angry opposition to everything and everyone. Steve Wozniak (the other founder of Apple Computer Inc.) was the technical wizard who built Apple I and II. Jobs was the businessman, and it wasn't until a few years into the life of the personal computer that he devised the combination of user-friendliness, product design, and marketing needed in order to create one of the most successful companies of the 20th century. But his almost obsessed, perfectionist approach to product development as well as marketing made him the best in the world. He trained and trained; he improved and simplified, and started over and over, until he was satisfied with the result. And he always expected the same of his employees. Good enough *was never* good enough for Jobs

More than anything, Steve Jobs was the face of Apple, and when he took the stage at Apple's product launches – with all the eyes of the world on him and on Apple – he oozed calm, confidence and authority. He was like a fish in water. But many months of preparation preceded each presentation. His very informal demeanor was created through intensive training. The last 48 hours leading up to a presentation, Jobs trained intensively on the presentation, and constantly asked the heads of production in the practice room to provide feedback on every little detail.

Jobs gave his first famous speech in 1984 when he introduced the first Macintosh, but, contrary to later years' presentations, Jobs appeared formal, e.g. he stood at a lectern and read from a manuscript. In accordance with his well-known sense of perfection, he has since, very intentionally, tuned and trained his appearance in connection with the presentations. His voice, his demeanor, and his gestures have become much more deliberate, and to a large extent studied.

Over time, the presentations also became more visual and engaging with the strength and self-confidence to use humor and impulsive anecdotes. Time and again he has proved himself to be a genuine master of communication, e.g. presenting very innovative products in a tangible profit-oriented way. In 2001, when he introduced the iPod, he presented it as a "thousand songs in your pocket." He had a rare talent for staging and dramatizing the new products. Here is his speech when he presented Apple's iPhone in 2007:

"This is a day I've been looking forward to for two and a half years. Every once in a while a revolutionary product comes along. That changes everything. You're fortunate if you get to work on just one of these products in your career. Apple's been very fortunate it's been able to introduce a few of these into the world. In 1984 we introduced the Macintosh. It didn't just change Apple; it changed the whole computer industry. In 2001 we introduced the first iPod and it didn't just change the way we all listen to music. It changed the whole music industry. Well, today we're introducing three revolutionary products of this class. The first one is a widescreen iPod with touch controls. The second is a revolutionary mobile phone. And the third is a breakthrough internet communicator. An iPod, a phone and an internet communicator. An iPod, a phone and an internet communicator. Are you getting it?! These are not three separate devices. This is ONE device. And we're calling it iPhone. Today Apple is going to reinvent the phone."

This has been named the best speech Steve Jobs ever gave.

But from the examples back to the point. Creativity is not, or at least not entirely, a natural gift or a genetic talent that separates the ordinary from the exceptional. It goes without saying that genetics play a role in the case of talent and opportunities, but, as the examples suggest, the recognized creative expressions depend heavily on work, practice, and dedication. The story about the world's most outstanding creative people is also the story about early specialization within an area of work, where it's necessary to learn the professional and fundamental rules before anything else. The next step is to target all resources towards shifting from the ordinary to the extraordinary level by breaking the rules that apply within the field of work. This is done by such a radical innovation that it either fundamentally redefines the area of work or establishes a whole new area. Creativity, therefore, is a combination of being familiar with and having an intimate knowledge of the area (hard work) and still being able to transcend this knowledge and see beyond, both farther and wider, than the analytical left brain is capable of.

In 1899 the American journal Psychological Review published a study showing that it took at least 10 years of efficient training to become an expert telegrapher. More

recent studies in talent training were introduced with an article in the journal *American Scientist* in 1973. The two scientists who wrote the article, Herbert Simon and William Chase, had done intensive studies of chess players and had come to the conclusion that chess players needed a minimum of 10 years of training in order to participate in international tournaments. That's how the theory of the 10-year rule came about. But even though you dedicate 10 years of your life to acquiring a skill there's no guarantee of success. Since Simon & Chase's article, Anders Ericsson, Professor at Florida State University, has made further studies of the 10-year rule. Anders Ericsson studies violinists, chess players and athletes. His theory is that the 10 years (10,000 hours) of training have to be targeted and focused, in order to identify mistakes and areas where competencies are needed. Ericsson's scientific breakthrough has subsequently created a lot of debate and inspired numerous books on the subject. In the books *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell, *The Talent Code* by Daniel Coyle, *Talent is Overrated* by Geoff Colvin as well as *Opdragelse af en vinder* (Education of a Winner) og *Guldminerne* (The Goldmines), which I co-authored with Rasmus Ankersen, you can read much more about why and how your creative level and your results primarily depend on your efforts and not your natural talent.

Many leaders and employees become confused and insecure when asked to "think outside the box" and create innovation. But the explanation you give that you lack natural creative talent is nothing but a misunderstanding and an unnecessary blockage preventing you from getting started on an active improvement of your business-creative competencies.

You and your employees have already spent time studying and practising your specialized work areas in the field of business. You have laid the foundation and completed the training. You have already dedicated a good amount of time to studying the fundamental rules pertaining to your area of work. Hopefully. That means that you can already achieve more, often by doing less, provided your actions are based on the right premises.

In his book *Ethics of the Next Millenium*, the Dali Lama says that it's necessary to have a thorough understanding of the rules before you can break them. You have practiced. You are experienced. You know the rules, meaning the entire "history" of the field of work, the terminology and the "geography." The "only" thing you need to learn is how to break the rules and more than anything else learn to intuitively know when this should happen and when this would mean a valuable breakthrough within your particular area of work in the company.

Your employees have "no talents"

We are not born equal, but we are all born with a natural sense of curiosity, and we all possess amazing abilities at innovation. When we are children we can't stop asking questions, we explore the unknown, and we have no inhibitions to make the most far-fetched suggestions. Children are "born naturally creative." They are curious, full of energy and zeal, and they approach the world, nature, and life in general with a candid sense of wonder. In principle, they are ideal members of your company's crea-

tive brigade. But of course they lack the required supplementary insight and training to develop and run a company, which makes their creativity non-productive and irrelevant.

Children, of course, lack the required fundamental professionalism in composition, art or business operation to be able to exploit their naturally creative talents to create something that's new and valuable. They don't know the "rules," and therefore they are unable to balance them and break them in a way that creates success, recognition and adds something totally new.

For those of us who have not been pushed into one of the original creative and artistic disciplines our creative potential has been ignored like a little unused bundle, or a set of chest muscles that have never been used in an arms stretching. Your mind may be creative, but it can be viewed as a "muscle" that can be exercised but very rarely is in the fear-driven athletes of the business world.

From birth to social security, upbringing and education are focused on learning to think and act in a way that follows the rules, the norms, and the well-trodden path to success for pupils, students, employees, and leaders. The deductive and the inductive reasonings, which blindly trust the solutions and successes of the past, are the dominant working methods in society from start to finish. We learn to slavishly follow the rules and stick to the successful recipes of the past without asking too many critical questions. Consequently, we de-learn our natural capacity to think and innovate. The left brain-dominated parents, schools and companies have gotten together and (out of the goodness of their hearts) removed any leftover creative self-confidence and abilities to break the rules in any meaningful way.

When your current employees seem to lack talent in the area of barrier-breaking innovation (which hopefully, by now, you have realized is an absolutely essential ingredient for the survival of your company in the transparent, turbulent and user-dominated surplus society, then you know why.

Retraining in business creativity

Your own and your employees' creative muscles are slack, but fortunately they can be retrained if you, together, make the necessary effort.

Or can they?

In November 2011, the American social media expert Michelle LeBlanc, who is affiliated with the Creative Leadership Academy, posted a comment on the world's largest business network LinkedIn, which evidently hit a nerve.

The comment was posted within the group "Future Trends" and had the provocative heading "Creativity can be taught!" The headline and the content of her comment resulted in a long and intensive dialogue with more than 550 people taking part – many comments being quite long and very well argued. The discussion went back and forth,

often passionately, polarized between those who believe that creativity is an inherent attribute and those who, like Michelle LeBlanc, think that it's possible to train the creativity muscle to become supple and effective.

Here are some of the comments arguing in favor of creativity as an innate ability:

- *“Creativity is not something that can be taught. It is an inherent attribute that you have or do not have. To say otherwise is insulting to creative people. The illusion of teaching creativity is a marketing tool used by companies to sell their products to people who are not creative, and wish to be.”*
- *“Creativity can not be taught. It can be encouraged and inspired though. A creative person can learn new skills, explore tools, and techniques that will build and enhance the creative persons range. It is within the creative person's spirit and soul that the imagination and creativity blooms.”*

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I totally agree. Not with the comments, but with the assumption that we creative people can be self-important – bordering on the unbearable. As you will realize later in this chapter, I find it hard to accept pretentiousness in the sacred halls of creativity. Those who possess this attribute dig their own graves far removed from the platforms of decisive decisions in the companies. For unquestionably creativity can be learned. There is no creative application in the human DNA. Like everyone else, creative people are born without any prior programming of their unique instrument – the brain and the nervous system. Just like other people or animals for that matter. The ability to create something new instead of repeating something that already exists is an activity that can be learned, taught and trained like any other.

My final bid on the truth is that your present and future business-creative level depends entirely on how intensively you have been trained in the creative discipline and how much you are prepared to concentrate your efforts going forward. If you are close to retirement and if creativity has been a foreign word in your vocabulary until now you shouldn't expect to be the equivalent of Steve Jobs in the business-creative hierarchy of your company.

Nonetheless, every leader – in particular top executives – could and should become substantially more skilled at business-creative work. The question is, however, how much time do you have to improve yourself? How much and how intensively are you willing to train your creative muscle, the one that's covered by your eyes, nose, ears and mouth?

Your thoughts and actions, the imitating as well as the creative, are guided by a combination of nerve cells in your most valuable PC, your brain and your mind. Every thought or action involves a certain combination of nerve cell activity. Your legs don't move on their own. They only move because the brain sends the message to run forward at great speed. Likewise, the eye is only a relatively simple optic lens that functions more or less like a digital camera. It's through collaboration with the brain, which transforms the incoming light rays into concrete images and perceptions, that the eye becomes a unique sensitive instrument. The brain, including the central nerv-

ous system, guides the way we structure reality, our senses, and the way we interpret what we see, our consciousness. The creative muscle is lodged in the brain, and via the central nervous system it's closely linked to our consciousness and perception of opportunities and limitations.

But our consciousness does not have unlimited resources. The brain has a gigantic memory (lots of gigabytes), but, like my PC, the brain's "microprocessor" has limited capacity of RAM memory, i.e. working memory. Our consciousness has a very restricted RAM capacity. The more information the brain has to process, the more complex the assignments and the less time it has to work on these assignments, the more energy the brain uses from its meager store of RAM – to stick to the same image. In order to ensure that the brain doesn't run out of capacity at any time it has developed a practical RAM-saving behavior.

In fact, the brain saves energy by processing the information and solving the problems as efficiently as at all possible, but with a minimum of energy, a very clever and unique phenomenon in nature. But that also means that the brain has an automatic button, like the energy-saving function on a laptop, in order to save its power. The brain allocates as little energy and attention (RAM) as possible to every functional action. Remember, it's active 24/7 throughout our lifetime. By saving its strength it's preparing itself to receive the unexpected, the new or the emergent sudden input that enters its field of attention. Rather than paying close attention to every piece of information and every fundamental problem that has to be solved, our consciousness takes the first available shortcut. Information is processed and problems solved *based on positive experiences* and in the form of *unreflected learning*, e.g. other people's (teachers' and literature's) perception of right and wrong, and/or the most accepted solutions of a given problem.

Seen from the perspective of our consciousness, the fastest and most energy-saving information processing and problem solving is recycling of our own and others' previously used and downloaded opinions, conclusions, and solutions. When we download thoughts, conclusions, and problem solutions from the brain's historic stockpile on the "hard disk", they can automatically be activated as fast as possible and with the lowest possible consumption of energy by allocation of only a few micro-bytes of memory.

We use the brain's gigantic memory to store the opinions, conclusions and problem solutions which have previously been successful for us, or which we expect will ensure the necessary success. That means that the "correct" thoughts and "safe" solutions are stored as distinctive combinations of nerve impulses, which are automatically and unconsciously released (as per the byte-saving feature) when we have to process similar information and solve similar problems.

That also means that the more often we have used the combination of nerve cells, the faster and more securely can the opinions, conclusions and solutions be fetched from the storage. Very practical, right? You react automatically, but in reality it's a set and successful combination of nerve impulses stored as a "code" which is released –

unconsciously – in situations that appear concrete and familiar. The main ingredients of the solutions have been stored once and for all, so why spend time and energy on creating new ones?

The efficient and energy-saving brain function is not stupid. It's very convenient that we don't have to relearn the art of balancing and movement every time we jump on a bicycle. The automatic storing of experience is also of vital importance when, in a split second, we have to return a tennis serve that is coming towards us at 150 miles an hour, when we have to multi-task in our busy everyday life, or when we have to avert an impending danger in the traffic. In such demanding situations the brain has neither the time nor the energy to reflect on the right reactions, actions and solutions right from the bottom. It's a matter of acting, now.

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Similarly it's practical that the brain is a little lazy and runs on auto pilot, for example when you enter familiar surroundings, like a shopping center or a supermarket. In order to find the milk you want you only need the 3 microbytes of RAM the brain gives you. On the other hand, if you were the architect who had to redesign the store your interest in detail would be far greater. You would pay much more attention to the minutiae, which would require 30 times more RAM.

A similar situation is when I go into the kitchen and then forget why I went there. My brain has allocated so little RAM that my only option is to return to the point of departure for my impulse to enter the kitchen. Ah yes, the sugar. That type of experience tells us that we have relied a little too much on the autopilot. That's probably OK when we know what we are doing and are in familiar surroundings, like buying milk. Conversely, if you were standing in the jungle surrounded by dangerous wild and hungry animals the situation would activate the full attention of the consciousness, and it would be impossible to use any of the previously downloaded solutions.

Likewise, creating something new and act in an atmosphere of complexity and change needs something totally different than downloading. When we have to be creative and create new and valuable solutions for the unfaithful consumers we can't use the way of thinking, the interpretations and solutions we've already stored. When creating something new we have to avoid the easy and tempting shortcuts at any cost.

Grabbing the energy-saving applications of existing combinations of nerve cell activity is very tempting. But we have to process the information and resolve the problems. Take a fresh view of them and allocate the full RAM they deserve. We have to have a sense of wonderment and challenge ourselves, shake our heads, and push the brain to create new interpretations and solutions and set up different combinations of nerve cell impulses. We must force the brain to skip the already downloaded files on the hard disk when we need to create new solutions.

The left brain has dominated our upbringing from we were born until we retire, and the "lazy" and fear-driven nature of our consciousness has taught us to use the existing successful and hence most easily accessible solutions when solving a problem. We have trained ourselves to reach an impressive level when it comes to repeating

and copying a success as fast as possible. The human copier is becoming faster and more reliable, which is a problem when managing the profitable companies of today and tomorrow demands the ability to create monumental change in the company, at a fast pace, for example the task of recreating and activating the fundamental identity of the brand in the spirit of the time, so that it always appears valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing to the self-staging, professional consumers.

We have been slavishly following the established combination of nerve cells and are now experts in applying the existing stored solutions when working with the development of the company, the brand, and the products.

It goes without saying that creating something new rather than repeating something already existing does not come by itself. In order to enhance your own and your employees' capabilities to establish new combinations of nerve cells and develop new solutions instead of automatically using what's already there, most people will have to exert themselves like never before.

You and your employees not only have to train in the right way, but also intensively work on establishing new combinations of active nerve cells in order to retrain the creative muscles. And there are no excuses for not improving yourself. The creative level in a certain field is not innate, as previously stated. It's not a matter of a lower IQ either.

Your IQ only reflects the general intelligence of your left brain, and not the ability to use this intelligence in concrete contexts, such as the fast-paced, valuable differentiation of the company's brands. Your general intelligence is most probably sufficient. No relationship has been established between increased creativity and an IQ above 120, which is not much higher than the average.

Training in establishing new active combinations of nerve cells and creating new solutions cannot be an isolated activity removed from the problems of everyday life; neither can it be learned once and for all at an educational institution. The training happens in everyday concrete situations where new combinations and solutions present themselves, where evaluations or decisions have to be made. It's within your own specific area of work in the business environment that you have to be able to break the rules creating value for the brand and the company.

When you are facing challenges and have to reinvent the company's business model or activate the brands in the spirit of the time in a valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing way, that's when you have to train your creative consciousness. Or when the company's logistics or other critical aspects of the operation and financial circumstances of the company have to be reevaluated, then your capacity to establish new combinations of nerve cells for practical purposes can and should be trained.

Retraining the business creativity is a "learning-by-doing" activity with an increased awareness of the objective of the business creativity and its vital components. As already mentioned, this book focuses solely on business creativity and the crucial

means for retaining and expanding the brand value and hence the foundation for the company's market capitalization. So, taking this market-oriented area of work as the starting point, the following pages will teach us to establish new combinations of nerve cells and break the rules in a convincing and valuable manner.

Being business creative on demand

Whether the employees are tasked with developing valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities or have to rethink the company's logistics, it has to happen at a pace that is fast enough for the ideas and the changes to be implemented before it's too late and they become worthless in the minds of the consumers. That happens much more frequently in the transparent, turbulent, and user-dominated surplus society than ever before.

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The business-creative employees of the future must therefore be trained in taking turns creating and participating in the implementation of ideas, in what could be called the 4x100 meter relay race of business creativity, where the baton is constantly passed from creativity to implementation at the bottom of the company's creative bottom.

The baton has to be passed back and forth between development and implementation at a pace where the creative team and also the project managers at the creative bottom of the company recognize the importance of starting, surviving, receiving, and implementing the creative projects.

Tomorrow's business-creative employees have to learn to be creative on demand. In the profit-oriented creative company they need to check in and out of the business-creative universe according to the needs of the company and the nature of the task.

The stay in the universe of business creativity can last minutes, hours or several days. The length depends on the nature and relevance of the problem, but finishes when the problem has been solved. Check in and check out, like at a hotel – the creative hotel within your own mind.

In order to establish your own mental business-creative hotel where you can check in and check out according to the needs of the task and the company, there has to be a dramatic change in your and your employees' approach to business creativity.

After 20 years as concept developer and brand director I'm getting tired of talking about the sacred rules of brain storming, fighting for large development budgets and spending valuable mental resources on making sure that everyone in the creative process feels they have been heard and are respected. Naturally there are many good principles in creativity's familiar tool box. "Weak" people, who may, in fact, have the best ideas, have to be given space, and creativity needs to have the right framework and the necessary facilities. That's been my argument all along in this book, since society has finally reached the conclusion that business creativity is the most important means in the expansion and survival of the company.

The truth is, however, that time and again I have seen that the struggle for the right creative conditions and processes have become isolated. The creative people are fighting so fiercely to gain a seat in business that they lose their perspective of the bottom line being the final objective. Creativity becomes an objective in itself rather than the most effective means of reaching the financial objectives. That's just as thoughtless as being unable to understand that brand value is the fundamental precondition of the company's revenues and that creativity is the necessary means to achieve this. That goes for retaining and expanding the brand's value as well as organizing, structuring, and managing the company's internal processes.

In their one-sided behavior, the left-brainers and the right-brainers are equally "stupid," in my opinion.

Consequently I have dropped the repetition of the sanctimonious and self-important creative rules. Your and your employees' creative muscles need a new kind of inspiration.

Instead I have tried to apply the most effective principles in performance development from the world of sport in a decisive improvement of your company's business creativity. What happens if your business creativity tastes blood in the mouth and feels acid in the legs? What happens if creativity is viewed as the most critical, uncompromising and consistent training on the road to victory, and nothing else? Won't the result be the exact type of efficient and profit-oriented creative effort that will create peace between creativity and the bottom line and make them friends instead of enemies? Could that approach establish your own mental business-creative hotel, where you and your colleagues can check in and out as needed and teach you to be creative on demand?

Performance development of creativity

Minimum 2,500 gallons of creative sweat needed

Most people are sipping a soft but ineffective cocktail of self-righteousness and naïveté when it comes to defining the effort needed for success. We imagine that we are talking about an ordinary concentrated effort like so many others. But 10,000 hours is more than what your average hard-working colleague puts in. Ten thousand hours is what The Beatles did for weeks running when playing six-hour stints at the Hamburg strip club, or what the Kenyan long-distance runners do, who start their training by running 6 miles to school every day.

When you recognize that you are not very creative and find it difficult to establish new combinations of nerve cells and create new solutions, it's only because you're utterly out of creative shape.

Business creativity is not served to you on a platter. True enough it's a fun and exciting path to follow, but it is hard, hard work.

Many years ago, Thomas Edison had the following epiphany: “Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.”

A minimum of 2,500 gallons plus of creative sweat is required in order to the top class, so you’d better get started on the demanding retraining of your and your employees’ business creativity. You don’t have to be just good at it. You have to be outstanding, and considerably better than your competitors, considering that these business-creative competencies will decide the future of your business.

On the road to the summit of business creativity, a road that is packed with intensive exercises in creating new combinations of nerve cell activity, you will, slowly but surely, open the doors to your own mental business-creative hotel. Every day you train you become better and faster – much better than your competitors, who most probably haven’t even started training yet.

Consequence training in business creativity

Investing many training hours is not enough. The effort has to be intensive and optimal in order to ensure the necessary improvement in business creativity. You have to practice the most demanding, but also most effective form of training – consequence training.

Consequence training means pushing yourself, in a targeted fashion, beyond the current boundaries in all sub-categories that are vital for your performances. In your training you need to constantly take the consequences of what it takes to deliver top performances and swallow the difference between your present level and the necessary top level in all the important sub-categories.

Therefore, the first stage in the consequence training is that you have to break down your performance into crucial sub-categories. The second stage is that you design the training so that you train the various sub-categories as targeted and as efficiently as possible. The third stage is the training itself, which must be done in such a way that you’re constantly pushed to raise your level just above the current one, and that means you stop, evaluate, adjust, and push yourself a little more both before, during, and after the training.

When, presumably in a few months, Tiger Woods will once again be the uncontested leader of the golf world, after a couple of years of serious crisis, it will be because he practices consequence training to an extent that you’d think he’s fighting for survival on the PGA tour. Tiger usual revises his strokes, breaks them down, redesigns them, and rebuilds them through hours of hard and frustrating training. The result is the microscopic improvements that brought him to the top of the sport, and it’s the same approach that will bring him back where he belongs, among the most impressive athletes of all times.

You must do the same in your consequence training of your business creativity – stop, evaluate, and rethink your business-creative performance – an endless process where you keep pushing your creative competencies to the next level.

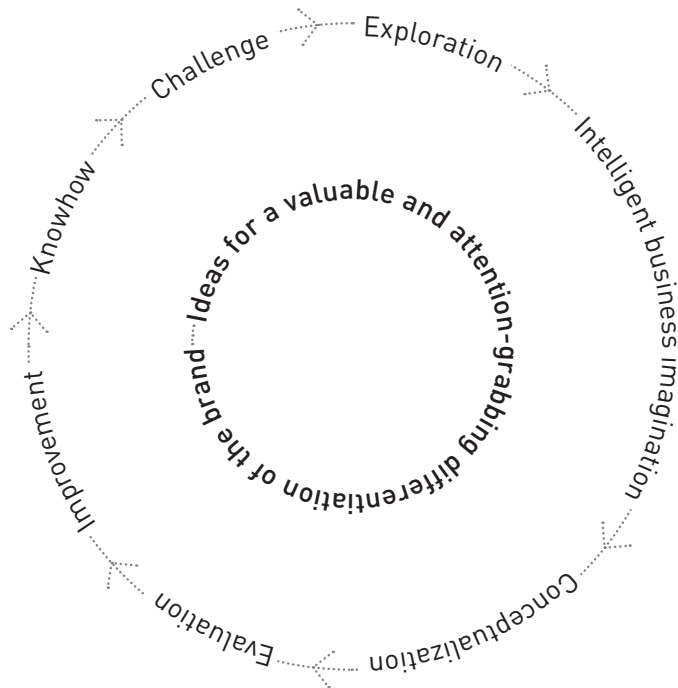
Consequence training is demanding beyond the ordinary. Exertion is the key word in consequence training, and it's as far removed from your creative comfort zone as you can possibly imagine.

Training is not just training, by any means. I realize it's easier to go to work and do what you have always done, or do what you're told to do. It's much more relaxing not to have to take an individual stand on self-improvement. We try to convince ourselves that since so many people put in the normal amount and type of training, we should be all right, too. But have you noticed how few of your hard-working colleagues are really outstanding in what they do?

The training cycle of business creativity

I have designed the optimal training cycle for business creativity for you and your employees so that you can get the most effective start retraining your creative muscles.

Figure: *The training cycle of business creativity*



The objective of creativity is in the center, i.e. the ideas for profitable changes in the company, including the constant valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the company's brands – your company's answer to the iTunes/iPod/iPhone/iPad expansions of the Apple brand portfolio, or "just" the steady stream of H&M's centrally positioned designer collections.

The next layer in your new training cycle is the demanding and unforgiving consequence training in business creativity. Consequence training is divided into the segments that are crucial to your ability to develop the new valuable and profitable ideas.

The pivotal point of the consequence training is the release of the new and valuable ideas. I call this release of ideas "the intelligent business imagination." What is needed is the ability to be imaginative and envisage something new that at the same time is valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing.

The intelligent business imagination can only be cultivated in the subconscious, which is a veritable treasure trove of new thinking.

Before proceeding in the training cycle of business creativity I want to give a short introduction to the subconscious – an absolutely essential insertion to understand what follows.

Consciousness versus the subconscious

The part of your brain of which you're conscious is called consciousness and constitutes 8 % of your total brain capacity.

The part of your brain of which you're unconscious is called the subconscious and constitutes 92 % of your total brain capacity.

- *Consciousness sees through the eyes and reads reality.*
- *The subconscious has no contact to reality and doesn't know the difference between the real and the imagined (exactly what is needed to create something new).*
- *Consciousness thinks logically. It can think in the abstract, rationalize, criticise, analyse, evaluate, estimate, choose, discriminate, plan, invent, and compose.*
- *The subconscious only deals with emotions and images. It can combine anything in any way in split seconds. It has endless approaches and opportunities.*
- *Consciousness is the most trusted friend and preferred and indispensable collaborator of the left brain.*
- *The subconscious is the most trusted friend and preferred and indispensable collaborator of the right brain.*

The unrestrained nature of the subconscious enables it to be imaginative and combine the activity of the nerve cells in new and unexpected ways. The subconscious does not only use stored solutions. In the subconscious it's possible to avert the effectivity trap with its automatic, effective, energy-saving and already downloaded solutions. In the subconscious, all well-known, unknown and unthinkable conclusions and solutions are viable. Only in the subconscious can you fantasize about new busi-

ness solutions. Therefore you have to learn to check into the imaginative universe of the subconscious, pick up the seeds of new ideas, and check out again in order to conceptualize, evaluate, improve and implement the ideas in your consciousness. That's how your mental creative hotel works.

On the road to cultivating the intelligent business imagination in the subconscious it's necessary to make a targeted preparation in the consciousness.

The preparation starts by acquiring a deep understanding of the categories within which the company's brands operate. A high level of market-oriented know-how serves as a valuable archive of interpretations and solutions which your subconscious has to avoid thinking about. It's also your know-how which is your starting point, when, as the next step, you have to initiate a conscious challenge to existing strategies and *modi vivendi* by applying new perspectives, impertinent questions, and solutions that are more valuable than the current ones. This is a way of briefing your subconscious in what type of assignment it's going to embark on and how radically it's going to operate.

Once you're well on your way to solving the creative problem it's crucial that you explore the wide world in order to seek out information, circumstances, and impressions that are both relevant for the creative task and stimulate the subconscious. It's when the subconscious is surprised and stimulated by new relevant impulses that the best conditions exist for creating new combinations of of nerve cell activities that deliver the seeds to the valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing solutions for your company and your brands.

Once the subconscious has done its job and an outline of an idea is emerging in the consciousness, which fulfills your criteria, then the crude and indistinct idea from the subconscious has to be conceptualized and subsequently checked and acid-tested in what I call a "feedback loop of fortune." Your most important role at this stage is to be the rigorous and constructive judge of your own ideas, but also let others take part in the evaluation with a view to enhancing the ideas.

Consequence training in business creativity is a never-ending training cycle. Of course it doesn't mean that creativity never stops and new solutions are not implemented. A rapid shift from creativity to implementation is necessary in the turbulent society where ideas become outdated very fast. In the evaluation and improvement phase the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the brand is a vital tool to navigate and determine when creativity should stop and the baton passed on to the implementation phase.

You and your employees have to find your own and individually adjusted work routines when working with business creativity. You have to build your own mental creative hotel where you can become creative on demand. But if you start by following the training cycle described above I'm convinced that you'll have a valuable starting point for enhancing your business-creative competencies.

The following pages will provide a detailed overview of the consequence training in business creativity, the training that points the way to opening your own personal,

mental creative hotel. We'll start with the obvious pivotal point for the training – the engine of the ideas – the intelligent business imagination.

The intelligent business imagination

Admission of creative failure by the consciousness

The big ideas that differentiate themselves from the competition and deliver something valuable to the consumers cannot be created in your consciousness. Here your thoughts are linear, step-by-step, and you can only imagine the next predictable step in continuation of what is already out there. Companies' simple innovation come from the consciousness, the kind of innovation that's limited to continuous improvements of small details without the capacity of ensuring the valuable attention-grabbing differentiation of the company's brands, but are generated from the chief executive's, the head of marketing's, the engineers' and the designers' unimaginative consciousness.



As previously mentioned, Bang & Olufsen is a striking example of a company that over the last 10-15 years have done product development based on a linear mindset and with the autopilot of consciousness at the helm. For many years, B&O's innovation has been living proof of the admission of failure by the consciousness. The company's product launches have been more or less limited to flat screens that are slightly larger, flatter, or more luxurious; music equipment and speakers that are larger, more expensive, or more odd-looking; or the extremely expensive and desperate flops such as the incredibly costly and virtually useless telephone. It was most unfortunate for B&O that the company had been in a self-promoting slumber during the very decade where technology and the music industry changed completely. Finally, after several years with catastrophic sales figures, layoffs of many employees and CEOs, the company seems to be waking up and smelling the coffee.

In 2010 B&O launched Beosoud 8, its first iPod/iPhone/iPad-compatible product. That was 10 years after Steve Jobs introduced the first iPod! Beosound 8 sold well, 50,000 units within the first year, and has thus become B&O's best-selling audio product in the entire history of the company.

In addition to the impressive sales figures, B&O is undoubtedly pleased that Beosound 8 has attracted entirely new customers, since more than 75 % of buyers have never bought B&O before. The company's first timid attempts at breaking the conservative, unimaginative and linear product development mindset have evidently paid off and have given the company the courage to continue.

In 2011, the company launched a stereo headset, EarSet 3i, which is compatible with all Apple products, and, as mentioned previously, in early 2012, it has introduced an

even more epoch-making product, at least for B&O. The Beolit 12 speaker is a portable speaker with a retro look that's distinctly different than the company's existing designs. Also technologically, the Beolit 12 will be a conquest for B&O, since the music player is compatible with Apple Airplay technology, which means it can stream music from iTunes, either via phone, computer or tablet.

Hence, 2010-2012 became the years when B&O for the first time has let go of (some of) the arrogance and the blinkers and cast a glance at the competition (e.g. Apple) and the fast-moving consumer designing products that take these factors into consideration. The results are products which may be revolutionary for B&O, but which most consumers already know from other brands. From a technological standpoint there are no revelations from B&O, but considering the latest product launches there's an increased openness, and, perhaps something that verges on daring and desire to innovate.

In the long term, it would be desirable if B&O could start cultivating the intelligent business creativity and create a steady stream of valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing new products. B&O shouldn't just search for innovation that pushes the product portfolio on to the market in sync with Apple's products. The company should create products that can contribute to the implementation of a new, more modern, dynamic and attractive brand identity. B&O will not be able to release the brand's enormous potential for symbolic brand value, unless it steps on to the market scene as a fearless and individual brand identity with the required offensive approach to the turbulent waves of society, rather than sitting on the fence and only integrating other companies' innovation into their own products.

Should B&O do that, I promise, on behalf of all the self-absorbed consumers, that we'll once again wear the brand and this time even spread the word that now there's a brand with a strong symbolic value similar to Apple, a genuine alternative to the world's strongest consumer brand; created in Denmark by a company in close contact with its right brain; a master of business creativity. Wow!

As mentioned, imagination only thrives in the subconscious. Only when you have learnt to shut of your consciousness will you be able to open the doors to your own mental, creative hotel in the subconscious.

The simple mathematics of creativity

Clearly and logically enough, the linear thinking and tendency to take the next visible step that characterizes consciousness can only generate predictable solutions. The consciousness simply cannot deliver the valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing recreation or activation of the company's brand identities or, for that matter, the reorganization of the company's production and administration that result in exceptional cost savings. On the other hand, systematically relying on the subconscious to create something new can sound exotic and complicated, especially if you're used to adding numbers, use forecasts, and are content with having given the correct answer in the outdated answer key.

But you may be surprised to hear that intelligent business imagination is, in fact, about addition and subtraction. The only thing is that the answers to the equations should not be predictable, but highly unexpected. The intelligent business imagination is actually much less mysterious and much easier to understand than you immediately think.

Inside and outside the product category of your brand you'll find a plethora of solutions developed by others which are ready to be explored and combined in new, differentiated and valuable ways in your intelligent business imagination.

The iPod is based on many different elements. The ghetto blaster, the Walkman and the first MP3 players were the forerunners that Apple built on. And incidentally, the Walkman was invented when Sony's engineers linked the company's dictating machine Pressman with a headset. The iPad was not the first tablet computer in the world either. With its usual fervor and innovation, Apple simply jumped on a product category, which most other companies had discarded.

Apple succeeded in creating "finger-friendly" hardware and software right from the beginning, rather than trying to fit the PC into a box without a keyboard, thus laying the foundation for the tablet. A calculation with astounding and profitable result.

Blue Ocean Strategy is one of the most popular strategic recipes to emerge after the turn of the millennium. The procedure is not complicated and clearly demonstrates the simple mathematics of creativity. It's also called the Four Actions Framework which calls for combining one or more actions that affect the brand's so-called value curve. The options are to eliminate some of the factors in the product category which the consumers take for granted; reduce or expand some of the product categories far below or far above what can be expected; or add completely new factors that the consumers have not been offered before. The objective is to create a brand that is so valuably differentiated that it's left floating undisturbed by competition in a peaceful and profitable blue ocean.

The world-famous Cirque du Soleil is a classic Blue Ocean case story. Cirque du Soleil got rid of the cost-heavy circus performers and animal shows, improved audience comfort and added clowns and jugglers, modern music and individual conceptualizations of the performances. The result of the calculations became an entirely new genre of entertainment with no direct competition whatsoever. From a creative artist's commune started by two Canadian street performers in 1984, Cirque du Soleil is now a well-oiled, conceptualized, but still creative and immensely successful machine. The circus has more than 5,000 employees today from more than 60 countries, and it has performed for an audience of over 100 million. In 2011 alone 15 million people watched one of the 22 Cirque du Soleil shows that tour the world. And in the meantime, the two founders are the first street entertainers to become multi-billionaires.

Power and exponential calculations for top executives

Grasping the Blue Ocean formula and the simple mathematics of creativity is easy. Devising the exact new combinations of existing ideas and solutions that will ensure the brand the required, valuable, and attention-grabbing differentiation is a much more difficult proposition.

Being different and attention-grabbing is not enough for the new product. It also has to be valuable. Conversely, it's not good enough to be valuable, if it doesn't differentiate itself from the competition and grab the consumers' attention. If the world stood still, the consumers were cooperative and grateful and the competition had gone to sleep, the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation would be a manageable task; but the world in which your brand operates is not exactly stationary and uncritical, is it?

We need to find the new combinations of content and initiatives that make a difference for the consumers and your brand. The equation $2+2$ has to be much more than 4.

The valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of your brand has to create a so-called exponential effect for your brand's attractiveness, revenue and earnings. In order to achieve this exponential effect, the ideas for recreation and activation of the brand identity should represent a breakthrough compared to the consumers' currently available solutions – hence ensuring that their basic needs are better met.

The criteria that the ideas for recreating and activating to brand identity have to meet are that they should represent something

- New for the consumers, not just for the company
- Valuable for the consumers, not just for the company budgets
- Different than the competition, not just different than the company's current initiatives
- Overall new, valuable, and different to ensure that it will grab the consumers' attention and wallet

What you don't have you must borrow

The different components of the solutions that will ensure the exponential effect of your brand on its attractiveness and on the bottom line are primarily found outside your own head.

The key to creating the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the company's brands with an exponential effect should be found in a combination of your own and others' creative capabilities. What you don't have you must borrow. You have to allow others to think on your behalf and take advantage of all the world's creative brains when it comes to your own business-creative efforts.

Remember the calculations we just made. Sony did not invent the Dictaphone and Apple did not invent the technology behind the MP3 player or the tablet. Others spent their time and resources doing that.

In the 1970s and 1980s Ian Schrager owned some of the world's most famous discotheques, Studio 54 and Palladium. Ian Schrager and his business partner, Steve Rubell, knew what it takes to create a place where people are willing to sell their grandmother to be on the guest list. They were familiar with "word-of-mouth" and "celebrity marketing" years before these terms became chapters in the marketing literature. In 1984, Ian Schrager and his late business partner opened Morgan's Hotel in New York, the first in a series of exclusive hotels. They took the night club concept and combined it with first-class design hotels (conveniently designed by others).

The French furniture and interior designer, Philip Starck, furnished one Ian Schrager hotspot after the other as a combination of a modern night club and an efficient design hotel. When you step into the lobby, you immediately get a completely different feel than in other hotels; a feeling of stepping into another part of the world where you have never been before; a place where most things are done differently. The restaurant and the bar in all the hotels are branded as the hottest meeting place for the City's celebrities – whether you're in London, New York, LA or Miami. With these hotels, musicians, architects, designers, fashion people, trend spotters and hip hoppers the world over have got something they didn't have before. They have found the ultimate meeting spot for creative business men and also a vital symbol of the creative culture of which they consider themselves to be an important part. By combining the hip night club with the design hotel, Ian Schrager developed a valuably differentiated and highly attention-grabbing hotel brand with an exponential development of its attractiveness.

Ian Schrager has continued to rethink the hotel industry, and in 2006-2007 he was involved in the creation of 50 Gramercy Park North and 40 Bond Street in New York. Both projects consisted of exclusive apartments in extraordinary buildings which Schrager with great success sold to well-to-do Manhattanites. One of the primary reasons was that an endless number of luxurious hotel services were included, such as room service, door man, cleaning, catering, babysitting, and massage and spa facilities; you can even have the staff walk your dog, if you're too tired. Another profitable calculation. "I wanted to blur the distinction between residential and hotel living by taking the best from each to create a new genre of urban living", Ian Schrager explained about the combination of own apartment and hotel services.

Recently Ian Schrager has been working on the opening of another chain of hotels named Public – another fantastic example of a calculation with a surprising result and a perfect brand surf. Public surfs on the wave of moderation and value-for-money in the recession-hit society. In usual Ian Schrager style, Public is still a combination of the best of the best from the luxury and boutique hotels, but Public has chosen to forego any type of superficial and redundant services known from the luxury hotels. Most guests don't find having access to room service around the clock to be indispensable, but it's expensive for the hotel to man the kitchen 24/7; costs that are added to the price when it comes down to it. The result of luxury minus irrelevant but expensive services is a top design hotel which delivers the best (what is important for the guests), while still being within the reach of most people.

If you haven't stayed at one of Schragger's extraordinary hotels you should allow yourself the exclusive and inspiring experience of checking in with one of the foremost players in the field of intelligent business imagination.

This is how you push your subconscious

As mentioned, it's only in the subconscious where imagination rules that you'll be able to combine existing ideas in such a new, differentiated and valuable way that it will ensure a breakthrough in relation to already existing solutions in the market. In the subconscious, reason, rational arguments, and reactionary logic have been benched. In the subconscious, we can let the boundless and anarchistic business creativity loose and let the most unthinkable and unseen combinations of ideas come to the surface. We hand over the power to feelings, emotions, intuition, the nonsensical, and the immediate when we continue mixing new combinations in the pursuit of ground-breaking changes in the company, e.g. the constant reinvention of the company's brands. In the subconscious we can solve the equations so that they give extraordinarily profitable results.

You and your employees need to learn to push the subconscious in a targeted manner so that you can kick open the door to your own mental creative hotel and the intelligent business imagination, whenever you need to. The new ideas should not just come to you now and again, when you stumble into the subconscious with a concrete assignment. You have to be business creative on demand and be able to check in and out of your mental creative hotel in accordance with the company's increasing needs in the turbulent, transparent and user-dominated surplus society.

Such pushing of your subconscious acts as a "put-and-take" process. First you must brief the subconscious in the demanding problem it has to solve. This creative brief can be done through a systematic and deliberate challenge to present systems and norms so that the subconscious can take its point of departure in some concrete (probably insufficient) proposals for solutions. It's all right if you have a strong belief that you can create good ideas in your consciousness, since the systematic and deliberate challenge is an excellent preparation for the really creative work which the subconscious is embarking on.

Once you're on your way to challenge the existing solutions and create new ones, you have to make sure to turn off your consciousness on a regular basis and stimulate your imagination with new impressions and ideas from near and far so that the subconscious gets the best possible working conditions. And then be ready to grab the seeds for good ideas once they take hold in your consciousness.

Most people report that they always carry several ideas from the bathroom and from their jog. It's the subconscious that has been active while the toilet seat or the sneakers have deflected the consciousness. The sooner you recognize that your subconscious is your business-creative goldmine, the sooner you will start respecting, nurture, and open up to the subconscious when you need it.

Your mental creative hotel won't open until it has room and freedom to do as it pleases. Allow the subconscious to initiate a "friendly take-over" of your brain activities. You have to turn off both the auto pilot and the logic of your left brain that judges if something is right or wrong. You have to bring yourself into the mental state which accompanies a brain wave frequency between 8 and 22 Hz, the so-called Alpha and Theta brain wave activity.

Freud called dreams (Delta=brain wave frequency below 8 Hz) the "royal road" to the subconscious. Hypnosis, meditation, and sleep are all activities which supposedly have a profound effect on the brain wave activity and can thus help us arrive at the right Alpha or Theta state – the optimal brain frequency for creative thinking.

It may work for some, and I accept the idea of disconnecting the dominating left brain by lowering the brain frequency from Beta2 (above 22,000 Hz), but I have to admit that neuro feedback, mindfulness, or meditation for me rarely is a ticket to the deeper layers of my brain. Honestly, I have never meditated or dreamt in order to reach a solution to a pressing problem. I am usually developing several ideas and concepts at the same time, which have to be completed and presented within a relatively short period of time, and I can seldom find peace and quiet or the belief that I'll succeed through hypnosis, meditation, or sleep exercises.

When I work with concept development I am in a tight partner race between my consciousness and my subconscious.

In my consciousness I am all the time working on creating a strategic overview, challenge the existing solutions with new ones, and evaluate the solutions to confirm that they are valuably differentiating and attention-grabbing. Simultaneously, I try to explore new areas, find new knowledge, and stimulate the subconscious with new impulses through new impressions.

My work routine is a kind of controlled chaos. I jump between working actively on the assignment on my work wall, notebook or my word document and at the same time, I actively surf the Internet, books magazines or watch film clips. I often move my place of work from the office to the living room, to a hotel, to a café, to a train, a plane and even to new cities and even countries. I jump-cut between assignments according to my inclination or motivation. I rarely push myself to solve a problem I don't feel like solving. I "attack" various people who have no insight into the assignment with a question taken from my context. The accosted individuals are usually clueless for I quickly move on. I just needed a feeling or an emotion from another human being. In the course of the work process I am also extremely distracted and absent-minded.

I constantly stop working, am lost in my own thoughts, browse the news pages, take a rest on the sofa, or daydream to get away from the nut that has to be cracked. Likewise it's hell for well-organized people to be in a workshop with me. My gaze wanders, I'm inconsiderate, I don't listen, I expect others to read my thoughts, and I talk incoherently, don't finish my sentences and write illegibly when I am presenting the solutions which I expect everyone is paying attention to.

My work routine is as disorganized and unproductive as it looks on the surface, but in reality it indicates that my subconscious is working in high gear while at the same time being inspired and kickstarted by all the new impression. I admit it may look as if I constantly “escape” to the subconscious and thus avoid direct confrontations with the problem of the assignment, but I’m constantly in some form of meta consciousness where I realize that the purpose of the “escape” is that I have to devise the absolutely perfect idea. In other words, I’m not “escaping;” I’m “chasing” the seeds of effective ideas at the only place where they can be found – in the subconscious.

My daily work routine usually ends with an overview of my ideas and solutions, sometimes with the feeling that the ideas have reached a certain level. At other times I feel that the ideas are not holding. That doesn’t make me try to convince myself that the ideas are good enough. The day’s work should not be wasted, and it rarely is, for the workday never ends in the subconscious. It runs 24/7 and ends where I left off in the daily work process. That means that often when I’m working on something entirely different and, in a sense, move to an Alpha state over a long period of time I manage to pull the best ideas and the greatest clear-sightedness up from the subconscious.

Isn’t it wonderful? You can stop your intense work processes relatively early and let the subconscious do the most demanding part of the creative work. If you get home from work, stressed out and in a bad mood due to an unsolved problem, the last thing you should do is to slam the door to the home office and try to push your consciousness to deliver a solution which I’m unable to deliver, irrespective of how hard you push. The only outcome of that process is divorce and neglected children.

You must also be aware that if you want the subconscious to play the role of your most important personal assistant, then you are actually at work even though you’re involved in other activities. That means that when the ideas and the clear insight emerge from the consciousness you become restless and appear distracted in the activity you’re involved in. If I took measurements during my runs I would be able to observe large fluctuations in speed on the same distances. When the ideas are pressing, the consciousness concentrates all its resources on receiving and processing the seed of a good idea, and my movements in the sneakers become slower and slower. If you’re in the middle of an important round of golf or are pushing yourself to perform to the limit in preparation for the next marathon, then both the subconscious and the consciousness are busy with this activity, so you shouldn’t expect any great idea to develop during that process. Conversely, if you’re in the process of pushing your subconscious in the pursuit of new ideas when you are running or playing golf, don’t expect to set new records on your daily run or improve your golf handicap.

No matter how long you have the opportunity or the patience to remain in the imaginative world of the subconscious you have to be prepared to be receptive to the new ideas when they emerge in you subconscious.

The very determined and broad-shouldered ticket collector of the left brain is waiting at the exit of the subconscious ready to disregard all the ideas that don't look like replicas of the existing solutions or the company's or the brand's existing reality. Here you have to stop, have a serious conversation with the ticket collector and tell him about the criteria for your ideas. When you have patiently explained to him that in order to survive in the turbulent and user-dominated surplus society it's vital that the company has valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the company's brands, then he'll understand, loosen up, and also accept the ideas with an open and constructive mind.

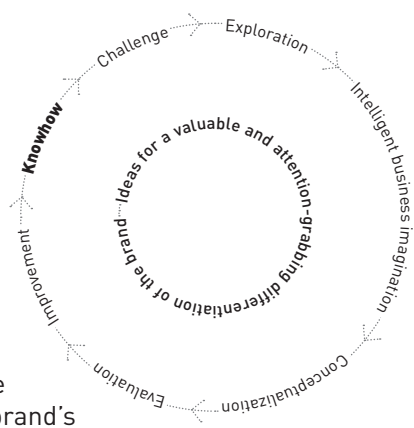
When you have pushed the subconscious many, many times and had conversation after conversation with the persistent ticket collector of the left brain, you'll become an expert in sorting among the new combinations and ideas when they land in your consciousness. That's when you know instinctively whether you have found something that can do the valuably differentiating job for the company's brands. Then you have acquired some of the most vital business creative competencies, i.e. market empathy and business intuition, the ability to put yourself in the consumers' shoes and sense what ideas will help ensure the company's brands the necessary differentiation and attention while at the same time delivering the necessary value to the consumers – ideas that may change the destiny of your company.

Know-how

The blind experts

As previously mentioned, the creative work in the subconscious must be systematically prepared in the consciousness. The first step on the way towards the intelligent business imagination is to feed the subconscious with the necessary know-how about the current market, competition and world situation.

At this point in the game, you should already have stored a large quantity of knowledge about your brand's product category, its strengths/weaknesses and position on the market, as well as all your competitors' identities. You must also have insight into the consumers' attitudes and expectations in a larger perspective than just related to your own brand and products. Maybe you have to add to your own inner inventory of knowledge about the current market situation, the current range of goods, and currents in society. Or make sure your knowledge is up-to-date. You most probably should, for that's an ongoing requirement in the turbulent surplus society, where every day brings new changes in the collective consciousness and attitudes about each brand and each product category.



An in-depth knowledge about the performance field or the product category is vital for being able to create great ideas and a market breakthrough. Unless you know the starting point, i.e. the current combinations and solutions, your business imagination will find it hard to navigate around the existing solutions, proceed, and create new combinations.

In all the stories I have researched I have never come across any crucial and highly profitable development that was not based on exhaustive knowledge about the specific area of work. Each of the greatest and most profitable ideas are developed by entrepreneurs, leaders, specialists or company employees with a deep insight in the product category and a high level of business creativity.

The valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the brand is definitely the result of an evolution of ideas that have accumulated over time. Everything from the invention of the steam engine, the human DNA, and the iPod are the results of knowledge upon knowledge, idea upon idea, and combination upon combination. The depth of your knowledge and know-how in your field is crucial for your ability to recreated the fundamental brand identity and business model in your company and develop the new brand activities that have an exponential attraction.

But your knowledge and insight are of no use unless you're consciously aware that existing knowledge may prevent you from seeing other solutions than the existing ones. Your level of know-how has to be high, but without mental limitations. You have to be familiar with the solutions of the past and of the present without letting them restrict you and trying to make them the solutions of the future.

If you don't combine your exhaustive knowledge about your brand's product category with openness and appreciation for the valuable differentiation of the brand as the fundamental criterion for development, then you risk being one of the blind experts. These people have read everything and know everything there is to know about existing solutions in your product category, but they are unable to go on and create new, vital solutions.

In other words, you have to feed your existing knowledge about the product category to your subconscious. Not to develop something similar, but to do the opposite. You have to master the necessary know-how but be certain that you don't limit your solutions to your own knowledge, but rather do everything you can to challenge the existing combinations and solutions. To put it in another way, you have to change from being the blind expert to being the open-minded creator.

Challenge

Challenge to the existing solutions

You find the “kickstarter” of intelligent business imagination in the concrete assignments with which you challenge your mind. The subconscious acts as a homing missile that will do anything to reach the goal it has been given, irrespective of the nature of the objective.

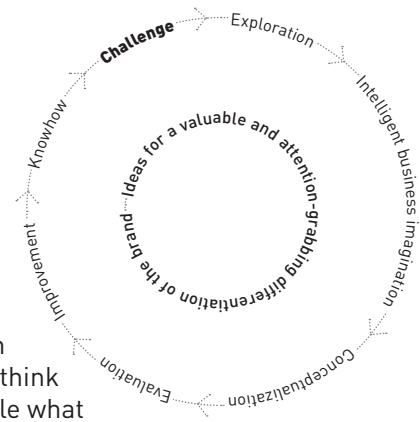
If you spend all your resources in the preparation phase to study the brand’s product category and think soft, sensible, and normal solutions that resemble what you already have, the subconscious won’t suddenly give you the opposite. On the contrary, your imagination will lean back and relax, and you are left with minor irrelevant variations of the existing solutions.

If, however, you spend all your energy in the preparation phase on challenging the existing solutions, split everything into atoms, zero out, open the gateways, and try to imagine something that doesn’t exist yet, then you’re pushing your intelligent business imagination to dig deeper and drive itself to where you’ll find the valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing solutions.

But the challenge to the existing solutions is not only a matter of pushing the business imagination as far as possible. The challenge also has to be intelligent with a large potential for creating new value to a large number of consumers. Any idea is a solution to a problem, and the larger and more vital problems you can solve for the consumers, the larger the potential that your ideas will be able to deliver the new value to the consumers.

Several years ago, Mitch Mortaza was sitting in the stands at San Diego’s Qualcomm Stadium watching the Super Bowl game between the Bucks and the Raiders. In the intermission Gwen Stefani and Sting delivered the entertainment. He noticed that, although they had paid big bucks for their tickets, the spectators left their seats, during the spectacular musical performance. On the way home to Los Angeles he thought that if the audience took a break from the entertainment, it was likely that the viewers in front of the TV did the same during the intermission. Mitch Mortaza gave himself the challenge to find out what it would take to keep the TV viewers watching the intermission entertainment, a huge challenge, since obviously the world’s greatest rock stars were not up to the task.

A “7 on 7” match in American football between fashion models and actresses dressed in lingerie became the unthinkable solution to keeping the TV viewers glued to the screen. In 2004, Mitch Mortaza introduced the Lingerie Bowl as a pay-per-view alternative to the Super Bowl’s standard intermission show. In the beginning, the Lingerie Bowl met the usual left-brain-oriented criticism, but today it has grown into one of the fastest-expanding and most successful sports entertainment brands in



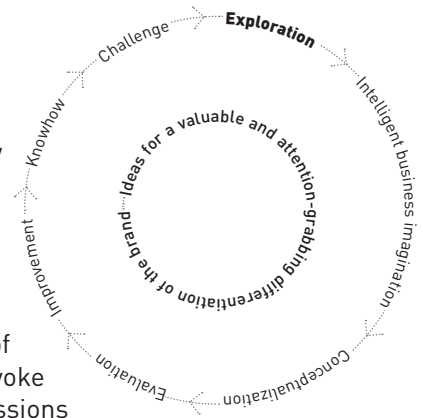
the US, the LFL, the Lingerie Football League. Here 12 teams compete in a league over 20 weeks with subsequent playoffs followed by the annual Lingerie Bowl. The sale of merchandise is booming, and there are current plans to establish national LFL leagues in Canada, Australia and Europe. Do yourself the favor of going to sportscastlive.com and buy the match between San Diego Seduction og Dallas Desire or Los Angeles Temptation vs Miami Caliente. I guarantee that the team names do not oversell the product.

Exploration

Exploration of the unknown

Once you have acquired the necessary know-how and have clearly and concisely defined the creative task with intelligent challenges to existing solutions, the subconscious has been briefed and is ready to start creating new combinations.

Even though your subconscious is a cornucopia of relevant knowledge, it may be a good idea to provoke and stimulate it with new knowledge, new impressions and new ideas that relate closely or peripherally to the brand's product category. Remember that the subconscious, despite its enormous capacity, cannot invent all the elements of a market breakthrough. You have to borrow from the creativity inherent in other existing solutions. But exploration is not just searching the world for new combinations. It's also a question of bombarding the subconscious with new impressions, forcing it to make new assessments, making alternate combinations of the nerve cells, and producing the new and valuably differentiated seeds to great ideas.



The time has come to once and for all bury the romantic and conceited approach to creativity. Creativity is not a god-given innate talent. Nor is creativity an epiphany where everything suddenly appears out of nowhere for the great creator. The outstandingly creative people of this world have an in-depth knowledge about their field of performance. They have delivered a minimum of 10,000 hours of consequence training with a constant pressure on their existing creative level. The most skilled creators do not think up their ideas from the bottom of their own brains. On the contrary, it's new combinations of existing solutions and ideas that eventually provide the decisive breakthrough. So cut off the pony tail, drop your black outfits and all the other pompous creative stereotypes, roll up your sleeves, dig out your mental compass, and go out into the world to explore what others have already created, and then dive down into your subconscious to combine everything in new interesting ways.

The company's business creative employees must step in character as humble and hard-working explorers, adventurers, and pirates in search of new combination options online and offline.

The term 'invent' originally comes from the Latin 'invenire' which means 'find'. Make a note of this definition. Creativity does not come on its own; you have to go out into the world to inspire it – both close to and far from your brand's present product category – and then down into the subconscious to be processed.

The sexual provocateur

The further you travel from the product category in order to stimulate the business imagination for the creation of new combination options, the greater the likelihood that you'll find something new and highly differentiating. Conversely, the further you travel the less relevant and valuable the solution may turn out to be for the consumers.

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At the end of the day, no one cares how long your inspiration journeys have been and where your combinations come from; as long as you are capable of creating something new that is individual and valuable.

The exploration of the territory of ideas close to your own product category is definitely the most immediately relevant kind of exploration. History shows that that kind of innovation has been the decisive source for creating new combinations throughout the ages. In fact, innovation and creativity was formerly a matter of building on existing solutions. In the time before copyrights, brand rights, artistic rights and personal branding, innovation was almost always about improving what had already been invented, and that certainly led to development and many improved products for the growing population.

This story should not be interpreted as my preference for copying or be seen as a call for continuing the eternal marathon towards minimal improvements and retaining the left-brain-dominated innovation culture. I just want to point out that there is nothing wrong with using the existing solutions and improve on them, as long as the improvement is sufficient to guarantee the brands' valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation and is deemed valuable in the consumers' consciousness.

In 1994, Agent Provocateur revolutionized the lingerie industry with its first boudoir-inspired store in SoHo, London. Previously, the world had only seen romantic, French-inspired lingerie, sporty underwear, big cotton sacks, or the "dangerous", and (for some) suggestive lacquer and leather underwear sold in porn and sex shops.

Agent Provocateur combines top-designed lingerie with an upfront and passionate relationship to the oldest game in the world – sex. In other words, Agent Provocateur simultaneously links lingerie with what is close and yet far from the existing solutions in the product category. Other lingerie brands had been promoting their brands with outdated innocence, and sex was a visual swearword, although that's what it's all about, both for those who put it on and those who take it off.

Agent Provocateur mixed the new combination with higher prices and a cool fashionista appearance, as well as numerous highly valuably differentiated brand activi-

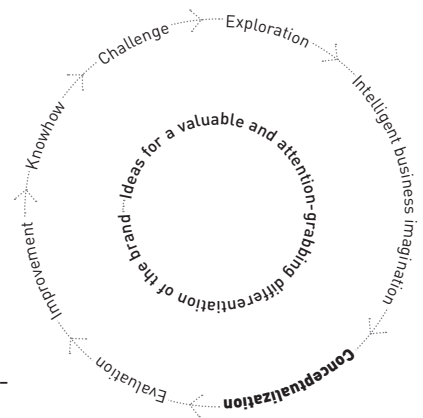
ties which all combine sexual story telling with high fashion. Kylie Minogue riding a rodeo bull was one of the first hugely successful viral videos. Celebrities all over the world adopted the brand. The most exclusive fashion magazines produced one sexy picture montage after the other with the sexual provocateur. And Agent Provocateur has constantly reinvented itself and its strange universe by using the hottest models, actresses and other celebs in the leading roles in movies and picture montages with the characteristic provoking, playful, and sexy universe. In its story telling, the brand has engaged in an eternal and intensive flirt with the most forbidden, kinky fantasies, however, always with sufficient class, creativity, and twinkle in the eye so as not to descend into regular pornography. Agent Provocateur has therefore managed to combine lingerie with what was mentally furthest removed from the virginal competitors.

They have surfed the rising trend with up-front sexuality and hedonistic human behavior and have thus given women a tool they didn't have before – oozing of sex while remaining the cool fashionista. Agent Provocateur gave women the opportunity to signal strength, willingness and exclusivity all at the same time.

Conceptualization

The beatmakers of business

Not everything that emerges from the subconscious is equally useful. Something is too simple, something too advanced. In fact, we only discover a fraction of the solutions that the subconscious produces. The free, lawless pursuit of new combinations in the subconscious is a nuisance for the multitude of ideas that are so insignificant and useless that they do not and do not deserve to come to the surface of the subconscious for closer evaluation.



You have to make sure that the subconscious delivers ideas to the valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing outward-looking brand activities and also to the associated inward-looking organizational activities and development initiatives, in the same way as a DJ or a music producer samples his way to the greatest hits.

We don't need cover versions that don't give us anything new. We won't miss simple or obvious samples and/or those that are used in an unoriginal or unintelligent fashion. We don't need samples that are different, but not harmonious and smart, only distracting with little respect for the original products. That's all crap that won't deliver the next big hit.

But the further away you go to borrow inspiration for our beats and the more individually and creatively you combine them, the greater the likelihood that you will produce a piece of music that differentiates itself and is also cool and worth-while listening to.

The same holds true for the combination of ideas from near and far in the intelligent business imagination. Copies and previously unseen combinations without any value, individuality and/or differentiation have no chance. You have to search for a business combination that is at once new, different, and valuable.

As said earlier, the subconscious only communicates via emotions and images. Your subconscious is incapable of formulating and forming ideas in ways that are intelligible for others. Combinations from the subconscious can be seen as raw, uncut diamonds that need to be cut into beautiful precious stones in the consciousness in order to be useable and have value.

It's primarily the faculties of the right brain that are needed when the raw "diamonds" from the subconscious are going to be conceptualized in the consciousness. It's the right brain that is best at redeveloping, detailing, designing, simplifying, and telling the stories as intelligible, visually appealing, and harmonious entities that will provide joy of recognition and wonder for the consumers at the same time.

I divide my own concept development into a series of specific phases.

My process is not, by any means, as linear as it could be, even though the process does start and end at specific places. It goes around in circles, and those around me may become quite dizzy and confused. They may find it hard to follow whether I am talking about my final suggestion for a solution, or just one of the phases of idea development along the way. But, as stated before, to me concept development is an open, on-going creative process right up until the time when the ideas have to be passed on for implementation.

My work process consists of scanning, scouting, development, design, and formulation of the concept.

I constantly scan all the ideas from the subconscious on to the consciousness. I scan them for their potential of becoming valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities. I scout to identify the potential of the ideas, not the face value. What the subconscious provides is obviously half-baked, so the immediate inputs from the subconscious have to be put under a mental microscope and enlarged in order to get an idea of their potential, rather than just stating that their embryonic starting point is unuseable or unrealistic.

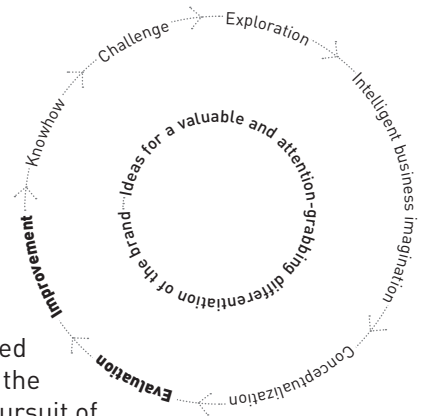
Once I've chosen the basic idea it's on to redevelopment. In this phase it's crucial to stay open and not shut off the concept development too early, for the subconscious is still working full steam. In concept development it's the trained functions of the right brain that interacts closely with the subconscious at the same frantic pace. I try to improve and define the idea all the time, so that it constantly matches the criterion about the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation. I regularly shut down the consciousness in order to give the subconscious room for additional explorations and preliminary proposals; but I maintain a kind of meta-consciousness where I am in targeted pursuit of the final, basic idea.

When the basic idea with the potential to activate the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the brand has been defined, it has to be converted into a convincing and easily understood entity. In this phase, the focus is on moving the fundamental idea forward and transforming it into a solution/activity that can be implemented. The idea has to be integrated into all relevant aspects in the company. Details have to be added to make it beautiful and symphonic. It has to be simplified and sharpened, so that it can be easily understood and communicated internally and externally on the road toward recreation or activation of the brand's identity.

Improvement

Opposition – yes, please

If you want your intelligent business imagination to deliver ideas with an economic potential on the scale of the iPod/iPhone/Ipad trilogy or H&M's brand activities, or Red Bull's takeover of an entire life style, then it's vital that the concept is pushed to the limit in precisely the same way as when the greatest sports stars engage in their merciless consequence training. The targeted pursuit of enhancement of the crucial aspects of the sports performance is exactly analogous to the pursuit of enhancements of the basic idea and the concept that the company's business-creative employees have to engage in.



There was no doubt strong opposition to the idea of the Lingerie Football League, and the discussion would have brimmed over with logical counter arguments such as the absence of athletic quality and gender discrimination. On the other hand, I believe that the opposition has helped to define the LFL idea into the concept it is today. Opposition has to be viewed as an outstanding opportunity to improve and optimize ideas and solutions. It's doubt, skepticism, and opposition to the ideas that beget the necessary improvements and the highest business-creative level.

The Feed-back-loop-of-fortune

When talking about business creativity, it's of vital importance that you take yourself and your ideas through what I call the feed-back-loop-of-fortune, where you yourself and others give your ideas the feedback, opposition, and new inspiration needed to reach the most effective and profitable ideas.

The first stop in the feedback loop is you. In the creative work it's important that you learn to give yourself feedback by constantly – consciously as well as unconsciously – remaining critical of your own ideas focusing on the valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the brand as the decisive criterion in the evaluation. You must learn to vary the pace of your creative work. At certain times you produce a lot of ideas, at other times you have to stop, decrease the pace, and try to distance yourself from

your proposals. You must develop a sense of whether the ideas can perform optimally in the real world and thus ensure the exponential development of the consumer attraction.

The next stop in the feedback loop is friends and opponents who can give your ideas valuable feedback. It's a matter of keeping an open mind to suggested improvements of the idea through the inspiration that both negative criticism from your opponents and the cheers from your supporters can provide. Remember how much additional value and differentiation you could add to your ideas by exploring and taking advantage of other people's knowledge, attitudes and ideas. Start with your strongest opponents. Continue with your most enthusiastic supporters, colleagues, customers and private friends. That's co-creation, I presume.

Just like your first idea is not necessarily the one that will provide your company's brands with the needed valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation, the feedback and opposition to your ideas that you receive in this phase is only inspiration to improve the idea.

Your feedback loop is not a consumer survey in any respect, but a question of listening and sensing in particular, stay open to the world, have empathy and understanding, but at the same time – and that is equally important – be receptive to your own intuition. That is a “deep dive” in the potential of your idea. Many of the world's greatest and most successful entrepreneurs and their companies have developed their most brilliant and profitable products and services based on this methodology.

When you have established contact with your right brain; when you are pushing your subconscious to an intensive pace, and have started cultivating intelligent market imagination; when you have delivered a large portion of the 10,000 hours of creative sweat in the demanding training cycle of business creativity, then market empathy and business intuition will emerge as a more permanent competency. Over time, you'll develop an unerring sense for when you have developed an idea that will provide new value for the consumers and guarantee a crucial and attention-grabbing differentiation over the competition – one of the profitable maybe's.

You become more and more adept at creating decisive, profitable changes in your company, and you get better at inspiring your surroundings.

Show me the money

Return on Creativity

“High performance business creativity” will be the ultimate creative method of training in the world of business in the future, and even the term itself is a clear indication that creativity is no longer considered a “stinker of sub-optimization.” Isn't all the creative hullabaloo just something we do in order to satisfy our employees' need for exciting assignments and creative development, I hear the left-brain-dominated CEO ask? Nope.

Business creativity is the company's most important competency in the pursuit of retaining and expanding the company's brand value – and hence the most crucial source of revenue and survival in the turbulent, transparent and user-dominated surplus society.

The biggest problem with business creativity is that it doesn't fit on a spreadsheet. We cannot precisely define the resources needed to generate the profitable maybe's or accurately calculate how much "the little extra" will cost in the short or the long term. We're missing the required factors in order to carry out an investment calculation. "Show me the money" is a requirement to business creativity that cannot be met at the cutting edge of creative work.

On the other hand, it's safe to say that in the long run the company will lose its earnings capacity, unless its creativity is improved and the brand is keeping abreast of the self-staging, professional, disloyal and fast-moving consumers who have learnt to surf on the turbulent waves of society.

A new financial approach is needed to cultivate and promote business creativity. Rather than assigning creativity to a romantic corner of the business where it's hanging in the air without any accountability or limits, creativity has to be pushed hard and given important responsibility in the company.

The top executives of the profit-oriented creative business should demand a considerable return on their investment in business-creativity, and they should also limit the initial investment to a reasonable amount.

As the company's Creative Executive Officer you have to be in the forefront of the business-creative revolution and respect the strategic, cultural and mental framework that is required for business creativity to flourish. You have to get started on an intensive improvement of the employees' business-creative competencies by engaging in "high performance business creativity," which will enable the company to retain and expand the value of the company's brands. That's what it's all about.

The higher the competency and experience the company manages to establish in regard to the business-creative efforts, the more accurate estimates can be provided for the expected revenues from the creativity and the required resource application.

The more pressure the company puts on business creativity – while respecting the necessary conditions under which creativity operates – the higher ROC (return on creativity) the company will receive.

Working with budgets as well as pre- and post-calculations for business creativity is a healthy activity for the company. Creativity should not escape the financial realities, but embrace them on their own terms.

Is it important that the framework for the pre-calculation of Apple's next new product is a little less precise than the construction of the next Apple store, knowing the

post-calculation on the investment in the development of the iTunes/iPod/iPhone/iPad universe? You're right. It isn't.

The profit-oriented creative company that has recognized that creativity is the best opportunity for the company to meet its financial goals is, in my opinion, on the direct future path to a healthy top and bottom line.

EPILOG

Hotel Creativity >> The business-creative training facility of the future





It's not a matter of *if*, but rather of *when* the transparent and turbulent surplus society will catch up with and devalue your company's brands, unless your company acquires the ability to retain and expand the value of the brand. The self-staging, professional, disloyal and fast-moving consumers are surfing the turbulent waves of change. If your company is incapable of surfing synchronically with the consumers, the company's brand value, relevance, and attraction will disappear in no time.

You and your employees need to regularly recreate the fundamental identity of the brand and frequently create valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities; not until that happens will the turbulent waves present a profitable opportunity for brand surfing – rather than an insurmountable obstacle that will have catastrophic consequences for you and the company.

I won't hesitate one second to declare that the success and survival of your company depends on your ability as top leader to raise your employees' business-creative level. Training your employees' creative muscles to make them business-creative on demand is an urgent matter with the highest priority. The employees need to check in and out of their own mental creative hotel according to the needs of the company to ensure that they constitute the competent bottom of the company. Profitable brand surfing and the required innovation throughout the company need "high performance creativity."

It's glaringly obvious that the creative work in your company cannot be limited to semi-annual department meetings and strategy sessions. Not even when the venues are top-designed hotels, with restaurant highlights such as "slow food" and cult wines. Business creativity must be a daily occupation for an increasing number of your employees. The constant valuable differentiation of the company's brands and

other business-creative assignments require your and your employees' undivided attention and effort on a daily basis. You must be able to check in and out of the universe of creativity. Development, implementation. Right brain, left brain. Alternately. At a rapid pace.

The frequency of the business-creative tasks leaves no room for traveling, exploring and being stimulated by the pulsating world outside the company's four walls every time you need to work in the creative universe. The optimal framework for business-creative work cannot only exist outside; it has to be inside the company as well.

I suggest that as the new Creative Executive Officer, you kick-start the company's creative revolution by designing its offices as an ultimate training facility for business creativity.

In addition to the proper mental framework, you have to create the ultimate physical accommodations to cultivate "high performance business creativity" in your company. Establish your own Hotel Creativity, thus providing the optimal business-creative training facilities.

The machine workers have CNC machines, warehouse personnel have fork-lifts, salesmen have cars, and the office staff has top-tuned PCs and Intranet.

It's self-evident that the employees whose job it is to develop the crucial business ideas such as recreating and activating the fundamental company brands within the spirit of the time must have the proper tools and optimal facilities to perform their important business-creative work.

The gold mine of business creativity

Your company's Hotel Creativity shouldn't just be a simple standard innovation room with a whiteboard and a lonely table tennis table which no one uses, like in many companies.

Hotel Creativity isn't a luxurious designer hotel where everything is served on a silver platter, but a serious training facility for business creativity. Here the sweat of creativity is streaming down the walls – in an intensive and challenging pursuit of the day's valuable and attention-grabbing differentiation of the company's brands, as well as other solutions that will be vital for the company's success and survival.

Hotel Creativity is not "cozy teambuilding" or "funky employer branding."

Hotel Creativity is deeply serious.

Just like management, plainly speaking, prefers to see the salesmen on the road, likewise management in the profit-oriented creative company should demand that employees with development responsibility and who are in charge of development

tasks (the creative bottom) engage in training at the business-creative training facility on a regular basis.

Some years ago, I studied the most successful hothouses within the field of elite sport. While researching my books "Opdragelse af en vinder" (*Education of a Winner*) and "Guldminerne" (*The Gold Mines*) I studied the background of the Russian miracle in women's tennis, the Jamaican sprinters, and the Kenyan long-distance runners, who all shared some common features in regard to facilitating top performances. I tried to explain how Russian women's tennis could jump from having one player on the world ranking list's top 100 (No 42) to 15 players in the top-100 list (5 in the top 10) in the course of 15 years; how a small island of 2.6 million people, in a relaxed "reggae" atmosphere, is capable of having an unprecedented dominance in the sprint disciplines in athletics; how one single Kenyan tribe – the Nandi tribe from the Rift Valley in Kenya – has been able to dominate most long-distance running disciplines for several generations.

The answer lies in training environments with a clear focus, a passionate and competitive training culture, a collective winner mentality, the proper training facilities, as well as competent master coaches, which, in aggregate, make the environments veritable gold mines that develop an exceptional number of world-class athletes in a certain discipline.

It's doubtful whether Usain Bolt would have become the fastest man in the world had he been born in Cuba instead of Jamaica. It's quite simply of vital importance for the ability to create top performances that you land in the right training environment with the necessary facilities at your disposal within the respective field of performance.

For many years, the world's most innovative (and profitable) companies have been working on establishing creative working environments as a natural foundation for the company's creative work. In companies like Apple, Red Bull, Google, Adidas and Facebook the creative work environments are vital.

In those companies, the "crooked" and cool interior design sets the tone and creates a relaxed atmosphere and creative culture throughout the company. The design communicates freedom, openness, passion, and a wish for innovation to the employees, and it works. I'll claim that the creative work environment is directly proportional to the creative and innovative level in the company.

But instead of just copying "best practice" in creative work spaces I suggest you let yourself be inspired by the athletic gold mines when arranging and facilitating your company as the ultimate training facility of business creativity.

In clubs like the MVP Track Club in Jamaica, Spartak Tennis Club in Moscow and St. Patrick's High School in Kenya, the eternal flame of motivation is burning pushing people to deliver the most effective training effort and the best performances. The clubs live a fairly isolated life where the only thing that matters is the maximum im-

provement and the best performances. Stories of former and current members who have gone all the way and won the biggest prizes in terms of self-esteem, money and recognition act as a constant igniter of motivation in the clubs and in the members of the local communities.

In the hothouses of sport, all cultures of positive psychology or work processes are constantly being viewed critically. A “lactic-acid culture” prevails where the athletes constantly push themselves beyond their own limits. They have the courage to challenge their own existing level at a regular basis with the risk of failure as an obvious result. It’s the desire for victory, not the fear of defeat that drives them.

My thought is that, by combining the culture of the athletic gold mines with all aspects of cultivating “high performance business creativity,” it’s possible to create a gold mine of business creativity in your own company.

My proposal for the “architecture” and facilities at Hotel Creativity has been forced to go all the way; far beyond the boundary of what looked right and “safe” in the false light of the past. Hotel Creativity is driven by the ambition of creating the ultimate physical framework for practicing the type of business creativity that will guarantee a profitable future for your company.

I present to you and your company: Hotel Creativity – an untested, novel proposal – a profitable one, maybe.

This is how you build your own Hotel Creativity

I imagine Hotel Creativity as an absolutely new and original but realistic proposal for establishing the necessary facilities and the necessary inspiration and culture to raise the level of creativity in the organization. There’s no need at all to move or build new headquarters in order to kick-start the business creativity.

My proposal for Hotel Creativity is not a ready-made standard solution that fits every company, nor a kind of answer key. Hotel Creativity should be seen as a smorgasbord of inspiration and relevant new ideas. The facilities and the principles from Hotel Creativity can be scaled to any size and integrated into any company.

The interior design and the culture in profit-oriented creative companies like Google can be hard to live up to. Instead of being overpowered by the level of some of the world’s most creative and profitable companies you could start by working according to the simple search-and-replace principle in the design of the company’s premises. Search all the places in the company’s interior design and facilities that emanate “best practice” and stagnant fear-driven normalization and replace them with design and facilities that bring out differentiation, outlandishness, and courage in a dynamic universe. Why hypnotize the employees to perform worthless repetitions instead of offensive innovation, when the latter is what’s needed.

Google's thousands of square feet of wall space to note down new ideas shouldn't prevent you from creating your own company wall of ideas on some empty 450 square feet of wall, where some trivial lithographs probably are hanging right now.

Emphasize the company's creative revolution

The establishment of the company's creative hothouse should not only give the employees the optimal physical framework to cultivate "high performance business creativity," but also be a clear marker of the company's focus on business creativity. If you, the top leader, really want to be in the forefront of the company's creative revolution, then build your own Hotel Creativity as a prominent creative change in your company.

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Your Hotel Creativity should be the symbol of the vital importance of business creativity in all functional areas of the company. Hotel Creativity should not be limited to one, exciting development room for the design department, but be the creative hothouse for the entire company scattered over as many rooms and offices as possible.

The advertising industry is probably the industry that has the most deeply rooted appreciation for self-staging. That's why you find a host of companies that have managed to stage their creative culture in very specific and noticeable ways.

One example is the American advertising agency TBWA/Chiat/Day in Los Angeles, a highly profiled and creative agency, which develops state-of-the-art communication ideas for customers like Absolut Vodka, Adidas, Apple and McDonald's. As early as 1998, the American architectural firm Clive Wilkinson Architects, who were the creative brains behind the development of Google's headquarters Googleplex, launched the idea about establishing an entire advertising city as the domicile for TBWA/Chiat/Day. That basic concept has since developed in terms of size, number of employees, and creative interior design. The development of the advertising city is based on Clive Wilkinson's deep insight into the agency, its culture, work environment, and its way of thinking and working creatively. The "town" is based in a 1.3 million square foot warehouse which creates a natural framework for this exceptional advertising community.

The huge hall is furnished with yellow containers stacked several stories high to create an organic, creative environment with one or more employees working in each of the open containers – some containers are built together to form large spaces. The containers are placed on either side of the town's main street. The setting around the containers consists of a "central park" with an outdoor relaxed atmosphere with (real and quite large) trees, benches, café areas and natural light from skylights. The open park area also includes a basketball court and bill boards with ads like you see them on the streets of the world's largest cities. Speaking of opportunities to test your own products... In the town environment there are various creative work zones, and some of the meeting rooms are in large, semi-transparent tents from floor to ceiling – impressive, iconic installations in the advertising city, but at the same time functional meeting rooms.

The “landing ground” for the advertising town is, like all other details, carefully thought out and distinctly different. You arrive at the large town through a long tunnel, as if the visitor’s expectations are meant to be heightened. You are not in doubt that you’re entering a completely different world. At any rate a “town” unlike any you’ve ever seen. And according to the employees, most first-time visitors are just going “WOW!”

TBWA/Chiat/Days’s version of an advertising town is quite a number of years old, and its life and coolness factor in the year 2012 is clear evidence that the solution that was created meets the need of an advertising agency for self-staging combined with a functionally optimal framework for the agency’s creative work.

Cultivate the passion for the company’s products and customers

You may take advantage of your answer to the ultimate training facility for business creativity to strengthen your product- and customer-oriented passion as well as your mission. The interior design of your version of Hotel Creativity should integrate the company’s product universe without being reduced to a self-important, boring exhibition of the company’s products over the years. You have to create your own completely individual hotel.

As demonstrated earlier, adrenaline, speed, and excitement are some of the main ingredients in the Red Bull brand. The Red Bull identity has been successfully implemented in the design of Red Bull’s headquarters in London. Speed, enjoyment, and an adrenaline “rush” is provided for instance through a creative transportation scheme between the floors of the building. The slide is more than just a gimmick; it creates openness, dynamics and synergy between the floors and among the company’s employees. Red Bull’s meeting facilities are also inspiring. In several meeting rooms there are specially designed round tables with a table tennis net across and, of course, table tennis bats and a ball, so that the meeting can start at the ping pong table – another example of how the competitive, humorous, and creative spirit penetrates every corner of the organization.

Create recognition and surprise at the same time

Hotel Creativity must never be predictable. It should be changing in order to keep fostering creativity. Not only should Hotel Creativity be in a position to deliver all sorts of relevant inspirational materials (more about that later); Hotel Creativity’s architecture should, in itself, be a cornucopia of new and unexpected impressions that can stimulate the intelligent business imagination. The employees should move towards Hotel Creativity’s different zones feeling both joy of recognition and excitement.

Hotel Creativity should therefore be structured in such a way that it can easily be renovated and redecorated, so that the momentum of surprise and creative magic will never leave the hotel.

Another possibility is to supplement the training facilities of the business creativity with mobile units enabling creative work zones to be moved to various surprising locations close to the company site. Hotel Creativity may include a park of mobile homes, specially furnished containers, or an old circus tent that can be moved from place to place. Maybe it would be convenient to collect a stock of ready-to-go creative facilities and tools that can be moved around in the vicinity of the company site, sometimes to unexpected locations like old warehouses or beaches, where the very transportation back and forth from the company site to the hotel becomes one single extended stimulation of the imagination. As said earlier, this is just one suggestion for inspiration and not a list of items to be ticked off.

Establish the ultimate business-creative training facilities

I have already indicated that Hotel Creativity should not just be furnished in a relaxed and different style that encourages innovation in any way possible. Hotel Creativity should also include facilities that are practical for you and your employees when you engage in “high performance business creativity.”

“Fat vibes” don’t do it at Hotel Creativity. You also need the optimal functional framework for engaging in business creativity.

Google’s headquarters, Googleplex in California, as well as the rest of Google’s offices around the world, are stellar examples of the company’s ability to combine coolness with functionality in the creative work. Google’s interior design reflects its explicit desire to be the world’s most attractive and employee-pampered place or work – so it can attract the most brilliant employees in the world. On the other hand, the interior design, more than anything else, indicates that Google aspires to be the most creative company in the world. The design is functional, creative, and inspiring. It matches every type of employee, every work-related challenge, every mood, every taste – indeed every need.

It’s colorful, playful, creative, and dynamic, just like the appearance of the Google brand. And it’s created by both the company and the employees, since the latter are encouraged to furnish their offices in their own personal style. Employees can enhance their physical well-being at Google’s offices at the abundant selection of sports facilities or massage chairs with lounge music and a view of large fish tanks, in the wellness rooms, where masseurs loosen the tired IT muscles, or in one of the large anti-stress capsules, where you can shut out all noise, light and the outside world and take a snooze – or rather a trip into the fanciful world of the subconscious. Business & pleasure are constantly combined mentally to form functional and motivating solutions for Google’s employees.

Meetings and brainstorming sessions can be held at one of many creative meeting rooms designed as chair lifts, igloos, beach cottages, or over-sized beehives. All Google’s offices have whiteboards on most walls so that any idea can be noted down no matter where you are. This also inspires the employees to have short, effective, in-

formal and spontaneous brainstorming meetings. Even sitting facilities are designed based on the philosophy that if you sit differently, you think differently. Chairs are often replaced by large bean bags, hammocks, hammock chairs, sitting balls, sofas, and ergonomically designed stools. Through and through, Google is an inspiring, creative, and encouraging discovery park for the employees; it would almost make sense to charge admission to the house from visitors.

Below, you find my suggestions for business-creative facilities and zones which you need to add to the company's existing rooms to provide the employees with optimal settings to engage in "High performance business creativity" – a vital activity for the future earnings capacity of your company.

Your employees should be able to check in at your Hotel Creativity at different times in order to acquire the necessary market-oriented know-how, spot the turbulent waves in society, challenge existing solutions on the market, explore all other solutions and interesting combinations of ideas, wander safely around in the subconscious universe, receive inspiration, and apply the intelligent business imagination, develop concepts, enhance the ideas, and last, but not least, pass the ideas on to the masters of implementation.

Building your company's Hotel Creativity is not cheap, but you cannot afford not to do it, for this is where your new and much more creative company will live and deliver the foundation for its future profitable market capitalization.

On the other hand, building Hotel Creativity is not necessarily complicated. You need only add the facilities mentioned below, provided that's possible within the current framework of your buildings. If you do that, you're well on your way.

Turn on your left brain once again. Now it's needed.

I am convinced that if you let your employees check into the training facilities of business creativity on a regular basis they can radically, positively, and profitably change your company's future.

HOTEL CREATIVITY STARTER-KIT

The facilities at Hotel Creativity

The epicenter of business creativity

The epicenter of business creativity should be the physical and mental landing ground for the company's staff, customers, collaborators, and other guests. The epicenter should be a kick-starter of zest, openness and motivation for the employees to do the business-creative work. The epicenter should be the company's business-creative central nerve – a “high-pulse” area, with constant traffic and interaction between staff and visitors – and hence the most natural meeting place for the company's creative top and bottom.

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The epicenter should be equipped with every kind of supplies for the business creative work, both physically and mentally. There will, of course, be water coolers, coffee vending machines and fruit baskets. But there could also be surprising new treats. A refrigerator filled with the most well-known brands of soda, the company's own smoothie shots and other healthy snacks, delicious, creative culinary surprises of every kind, which demonstrate the company's ability to surprise and also pull the employees at the creative bottom together in informal common settings.

In the epicenter there should be an abundance of stories about what type of creativity the company prioritizes. The business creativity “hall of fame” is a key concept, where the company's greatest business innovators and best ideas are presented and celebrated. It's important to emphasize that the most profitable maybe's will bestow fame and fortune on both the company and the creative employees.

And, of course, the 10 commandments of business creativity are prominently displayed as a clear manifestation of the culture at Hotel Creativity:

1. You should not think of the bottom line in the short term.
2. You must respect creativity as the means to meeting the company's financial objectives.
3. You mustn't think that the ideas of the past are also the ideas of the future.
4. You are not allowed to copy.
5. You are allowed to borrow others' ideas, but you must combine them with something different and apply them in your own individual and valuably differentiated fashion.
6. You have to have the courage to make mistakes.
7. You have to seek out opposition to your ideas with a view to enhancing them.
8. You don't know if your idea is a success until it's been tested.
9. You must learn to trust your intuition.
10. You must always think of the bottom line in the long term.

Last, but not least, it's obvious that the company's new CEO should accentuate the high priority of business-creativity by spending part of his time in the epicenter to make sure that the prominent CEO DREAMBOARD is always updated with the business-creative tasks that the company's creative leadership considers the most important ones.

The epicenter is not only the place where all the company's contact points land – it's also where they take off. Therefore the epicenter has a map of where on the company premises the different business-creative training zones are located. In the epicenter there will also be an overview of who is in the process of solving what business-creative problems on that specific day. And this is where you sign in and out of the zones in an interactive booking system – which may be a simple blackboard, for that matter.

I hope you don't feel that establishing the epicenter of creativity in your company sounds overwhelming, for then I honestly don't know how you're going to tackle the many challenges and necessary changes in the future. Possibly some of your most conservative employees will make a fuss because they have to walk too far to taste the new delicious treats – why can't they be next to the coffee vending machine they usually frequent? But trust me, it's much more important to foster business creativity in your company than to please your most conservative and narcissistic employees so that they can maintain their working-day-as-usual. Remove them or make them keep their mouth shut, so that you and your employees can surf the future rather than be stuck in the past.

The room with many views

The "room with many views" acts as the insight and vision zone. This is where you need to find the kind of know-how that will ensure that you have the most accurate and up-to-date starting point for recreating the basic brand identity and devise the most valuably differentiated and attention-grabbing brand activities.

Consumer insight, and comments and attitudes expressed by consumers should be accessible on different media platforms (print, film, web sites).

Another constructive initiative would be to follow the competitors' movements down to the smallest detail in order to make sure your own initiatives are valuably differentiated from the competitors' and also ensure you're ready to act fast to the competitors' successful initiatives which may create new consumer demand.

Completely different industries and lines of business are exposed as a highly underestimated cornucopia of inspiration that can be "translated" and transferred to your own product category and your own product.

The technological development and society's turbulent waves must be minutely studied, visualized, and examined in a targeted manner. Transitory as well as long-lasting trends will be clearly displayed and updated on the dynamic "wall of waves" where in-

spirational films and collages are replaced on a regular basis. The employees should have the best starting point in order to be able to spot the hard-breaking waves and subsequently perform the perfect brand surf. In the “room with many views” the turbulent waves of change are served “on demand” as relevant inspiration gleaned from afar but also close to your brand’s product category.

Hotel Creativity will hire several creative globe trotters who are responsible for bringing the world to Hotel Creativity and present it on various media platforms in the library. The creative globe trotter is the company’s fly on the wall of the world. Half of the time he’s searching for relevant inspiration from near and far, the rest of the time he’s updating the library.

It takes far too long and is far too expensive to constantly send the employees scouting around the world in order to explore new and valuable ideas that are suitable for the creative combination work, but it’s important that all the creative employees play a proactive role as dynamic librarians in the effort to create the necessary insight and the inspiring vision. When collecting the relevant inspiration material the employees should demonstrate deep insight, a broad view, and deep empathy. And they need to make the creative leaps in their research which guarantee that they catch the inspiration in totally different worlds and also, as mentioned, in lines of business different from their own. And then they must constantly keep a finger on the consumer’s hard-pumping pulse. Keeping the “room with many views” updated is a demanding business-creative project in itself.

The work can be approached super-ambitiously or more low-key and exploring. Maybe your company doesn’t have a whole area or a specific room that you can dedicate to the task of showing insight and creating a vision. But you’ll definitely have a wall or two that can be used (if you take down the lithographs). So put up a couple of shelves and an inspiration wall – and you have taken your first tentative step in creating a business-creative zone with easily accessible insight and vision. You put relevant, inspiring books, magazines, journals, and perhaps your competitor’s publications on the shelves and on the wall. Make a note on the wall of the five most important waves of change for your industry, published by the leading trend or institute for futures studies. Display some positioning cards showing the direction the company’s brands should take in relation to the competition. Get under your customers’ and also your non-customers’ skin through images, film, and comments that are constantly updated. Make a note of the consumer value and competitive advantages you want to retain or capture. Do as much as you can in the space that has been allocated first time round. A little bit of easily accessible insight and vision will undoubtedly do more for business creativity than “the art.”

The creative court room

In the creative court room you’re critical of everything and everyone. The company’s existing solutions, the competitor’s initiatives, the consumers’ comments, the contemporary currents, and the current technology, as well as the future as it’s felt and predicted, all are being cross-examined and challenged. In the creative court room

there are no limits to what you can question or debate. The fear of being wrong and making a mistake is banned.

It's in the "court room" that the assignments for the intelligent business creativity are defined. This is where the foundation for the profitable maybe's will be poured. This is where the thought that something can be valuably different unfolds.

The challenges are posted and freely displayed with the sender clearly marked so that it's easy to see who is responsible and has visions. In this way the business-creative employee can find relevant assignments and challenges to work on and also contact the "challengers" to establish collaboration. The business-creative "court room" is an obvious place for the company's top management to be. Most employees are likely to view challenges or commentaries to the challenges coming from them as the most relevant and most inspiring.

Implementing the "court room" is a simple walk-over for your left brain. The only requirement is an open mind and lots of space to write down the business-creative challenges and comment on them. If you are a b-t-b company, try to take your customers on a little tour. They are bound to experience your company's renewed ability to challenge and your skill in uncovering your customer's profitable maybe's as magical, appealing and highly value-creating. And if you're a b-t-b company, the business-creative challenges can be brought into play on the company's online platforms for co-creation.

The feed-back and co-creation wall

Directly inspired by the social online media's walls where you constantly follow, post, share, "like" and comment on virtually everything, this is the company's professionally creative and open wall. On the hotel's business-creative wall the developed ideas must be displayed with room for comments, "like's" and signatures from the contributors. On Hotel Creativity's wall the important culture of having the courage to fail is established. But this is also where you indicate that there's nothing called "bad" ideas. This is where you cultivate and foster a gigantic gross volume of new ideas.

Hotel Creativity's feedback and co-creation wall is the dynamic pivotal point and creative melting pot. Here all ideas, thoughts, and angles on the company's future projects, potential business, products, services, customers, and communication are crystallized. Posting your ideas on the wall therefore becomes a natural part of the company's no-fear-driven culture. And it will be common for the employees to stop by and follow and comment on the company's creative pulse. The wall becomes the visible and tangible proof of the company's high creative pulse.

Next to the business-creative wall you'll find the suggestion box, where you can deposit your ideas as a bottle message and wait until someone pulls it out, finds it interesting, and contacts you about collaborating in a business-creative fashion.

The feedback and co-creation wall is relatively easy to set up. You can either use one of the existing walls on the premises, preferably in a room with a lot of traffic, or possibly in a corridor that's one of the main interior arteries in the company. An alternative is to order a white-painted wall on wheels which makes it a mobile feedback and co-creation wall. Give your feedback and co-creation wall a layer of "idea paint." Leave a bunch of whiteboard markers and a pile of post-it notes. Let the games begin.

The "run wild & fly high" zone

Hotel creativity's "run wild & fly high" zone acts as a creative training center, where you train by yourself or with other people. The profitable maybe's must unfold, be conceptualized, rethought, enhanced, and acid-tested on display boards and at other facilities, where you can view your own and others' ideas at a distance.

In the creative training center the rough ideas and vague impressions start to take form, become comprehensible, relevant, valuable, differentiated, and attention-grabbing.

It's also in the "run wild & fly high" zone that a considerable part of the "feedback loop of fortune" takes place, where you build on the initial ideas in a combination of enthusiasm and opposition.

In the "run wild & fly high zone" there's a multitude of different tools and visual experiences. The area or the room is large and divided into many different zones, where you take turns being inspired and engage in deep thought (wear ear phones), after which you formulate and improve on your solutions. The creative training center offers the opportunity to take a break from the conscious creative work, relax, and let the subconscious take over; later, once the ideas emerge in the consciousness, you'll start tackling the creative conceptualization once again and reap the benefits of the creative work of the subconscious.

Like all other sections of Hotel Creativity the "run wild & fly high zone" can be established on a limited square foot area and on a low budget. Most companies have a room which is not functional, one that was originally meant as a room for storage or miscellaneous items. Clean up and clear the space, then the room is ready to use. Even the smallest and barest room can be converted into the company's "run wild & fly high zone" in no time.

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An innovative business management book within the category of “a new society requires a new type of company”. Impossible. Quite simply. I have no idea what I was thinking when five years ago I was sitting on the couch with my foot and my newly sutured Achilles’ tendon firmly mounted in the support boot.

Virtually every week, the Internet has guided me to a new book with competent answers to the question of how to run a business in the future. I have read them all to educate myself, but also to find a suitable answer to the question of what is needed in order to move the inspiration in Hotel Creativity beyond the existing literature.

As such, the foundation of Hotel Creativity is my in-depth professional research of the most qualified books, case stories, and articles within the areas of social trends, consumer behavior, branding, business creativity, creativity, creative work environments, and high performance in general.

Hotel Creativity is not a collection of interviews. The descriptions, argumentation, stories, and suggestions in this book do not constitute the essence of other prominent people’s standpoints. They are my own.

My ideas are based on more than 20 years of practical work with the type of creativity that everyone now realizes is necessary to run a business in the future. In other words, I have spent half my working life delivering valuably differentiated solutions to conservative and left-brain-dominated companies. My own practical experiences have shaped my completely independent view of how companies ought to think and act, but it’s my extensive research that has enabled me to offer these views over and above existing know-how within the sphere of business creativity.

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Tomorrow's companies must be both creative and profit-oriented. In the profit-oriented creative company creativity is considered the vital means for profit maximization as well as survival. Business creativity is not only the most effective driver of profit. It is the culture and the competency which your company cannot afford to lose or be without. If your company lacks business creativity it runs the risk of drowning in the conservative, fear-driven and inadequate business models of the past, for example "me too", "best practice", and "business-as-usual."

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