

We all have a creative domain. . . what is yours?

Two weeks ago, we introduced you to our series on creativity and innovation, painting metaphorical broad brush strokes on the state of our world and business today, and that **creativity is the answer to being responsive to ever-changing and demanding times**. It is one of the fewer constantly renewable resources we all personally have at our disposal. We do not even have to dig too deeply to find it.

Creativity is not only a means to tackle problems we face, but also **a way in which to nurture ours, and other's potential, effect transformation, cope with change**. It also adds to our own personal competitive edge as we contribute to our wider world within our work and personal lives. This week, and over the next few blogs in this series, we will begin excavating the more specific elements of creativity and the simple, yet profound sources, that ignite our own personal creativity sparks.

But first, we shall **explore the notion of a creative domain**. We all have creative domains. Yes, you heard correctly. We ALL have creative domains. Often, when we speak of creativity, we think it is assigned to those in creative fields, such as art, novel writing, pottery, sculpting, or fashion design, for example. Well, that is not true. Perhaps people in these professions exercise their creativity more consciously, but the creativity factor is not exclusive to them.

So, then, what is a creative domain? I have a friend who, in her life path, has found herself surrounded by incredibly creative people – artists, pottery makers, sculptors, interior designers, jewelry makers. I have met some of these friends and observed the deeply imaginative and creative works they have produced in their respective fields.

“It’s odd,” my friend said to me one day, “how I seem to have attracted all these artistic people into my life, yet I am not creative at all.”

“I disagree,” I reply, as we share the sumptuously delicious pasta she has just cooked. “This is a creative endeavor,” I taste more of the pasta. I have this definite feeling that I will be going back for seconds. “You have a knack for going into a kitchen, and with the simplest ingredients, serving up delicious meals that are not only tasty, but artistically presented. You seem to do it with such flare and ease too.” I always wish I was such a wizard in the kitchen as she is, and that I too could seamlessly conjure such culinary delights.

I continue, “and look around. Look at your home. The way you choose simple art pieces, assemble antique furniture, rugs and artefacts from all sorts of random places to make home not just home, but a whole experience of wonder. The colors and fabrics you choose, the cushions you chose for those chairs, the choice of those chairs themselves and where you have placed them in contrast to other furniture, the pattern in their fabric... it all speaks to how creative you are.”

My friend does not know she is an artist. But she is. She has an creative instinct in all the things that fascinate her. The cook, fashion coordinator and interior designer. These are her creative domains. Even though these are not her vocations. She takes much of this into her job too, although this is not consciously done. The ingredients she brings to her creative domains in turn adds a creative flare to her actual vocation too.

We are all artists in different ways. It can be in the way we engage with our family, friends, and children. The way we dress, the way we do our hair. The way we apply little finishing touches to things we do in our work, in our personal projects. The way we cook and present a meal. The way we set a table for a meal. The way we decorate our homes. The way wrap a gift for a friend. The way we

put thought into buying a gift for a friend. The way we participate in sharing ideas with teams at work. The way we communicate and express ourselves. The way we apply ourselves to our jobs. The way we take on new projects, be they in our work or personal contexts.

I have another friend who is a graphic designer. "I am not creative," he says, when I challenge that graphic design in itself is a creative vocation. "I am not good at originating ideas – I only work with pre-existing ideas and shape those into something."

"And you do not think that is creative?" I challenge. I have asked him on numerous occasions to take some ideas I had for brochures, articles, or a concept for a manual I was working on. He has transposed these drab beginnings I have presented to him into quirky, eye-catching, enticing pieces, that even I have found myself immersing myself into, as if for the first time. That is just one of his creative domains. He is also an incredible cook. A chef in the making, perhaps. But he has a different curiosity about it and applies his analytical mind to the technicalities of cooking and how flavors can become symbiotic in scientific and varied ways. That is another of his creative domains. The latter, perhaps, more accidental than deliberate. But creative nonetheless. I see his enjoyment too as he experiments. He loses himself in these creative domains and so, becomes more creative.

John Cleese, the comedian, actor and trainer, amongst many of his creative domains, claimed in a talk he once delivered on creativity in business, that **creativity is not a talent, but a way of operating**. It is not an ability you have or do not have, nor is it related to IQ. Rather, **it is for all of us**. It is right there, when we apply a facility to get into a mood to operate in a way that our natural creativity can function. This, sometimes, not even for any practical purpose. It is often about adopting a childlike way to play with an idea and explore. It is about following hunches, being open to our curiosity, listening attentively to, and following our intuition, engaging with possibilities – often even without any design on controlling the outcome. But all this can lead to some very creative results regardless. If not, it entices us to new ways of being and approaching things. The process itself generates more creativity within.

This week I made a strange decision. To start an online Sanskrit course. I have no idea why I am doing it. All I know is I am intrigued by the notion of immersing myself into one of the most ancient languages on earth. **To walk a different road, break patterns of what I might usually do. Try something different. I do not know where this road will lead. But I find myself excited and curious at the prospect.** A little daunted too. But that is just the uncertainty of a new terrain I have not yet tried. But I will follow this curiosity regardless. The sense this new adventure brings, excites me. Excitement is a good feeling to spark more ideas and another renewable source to propel me forward. Perhaps in this, I will find another creative domain even.

TS Elliot captures it well. . .

"We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began, and to know the place for the first time."

So, begin your own creative domain explorations this week. Follow your curiosity. Observe your own activities and interests, both in your personal and work lives to begin understanding just what your creative domains are. Yes, the word is plural for a reason. You will find you have a few. Start with what you do, what interests you – these will all point to the unique creative artist in you. Don't censor yourself in this – follow the path and see where it leads and pay attention to what you discover along the way. It has been said, after all, that the journey is often more exciting than the destination. Wishing you happy meandering into your creative domains this week...

This inspiring blog is the handy work of Samantha Layton-Matthews; our resident creativity and innovation expert.

CreateAgility is a collaboration between Progress Excellence and a team of dynamic women who are ready to help you “look beyond what you see”.

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