

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 30

Organisations are in danger of becoming more insular, as creative leaders you need to start breaking down the barriers...

Break Down Silos...

"We are becoming strangers to each other, leaving communities to be marooned outside the mainstream...communities of different ethnicity and religion eyeing each other over the fences of our differences" Trevor Phillips ~ Head of the Commission for Racial Equality (UK)



"Rainbow Nation"

What are you doing to "break down the silos" in your organisation?

In August, I travelled long haul on BA Business Class to run a course. As the flight was quite empty and there was no food to serve (due to a strike), I chatted to the stewardess.

We had an interesting chat for about half an hour. Afterwards, it struck me that apart from a few pleasantries, I hadn't spoken much to a member of the flight crew in a long time. It's also been a while since I have spoken to another passenger on a long haul flight.

The reason for this is that BA Business Class has seats that sit at 180 degrees to each other. To provide privacy, they have dividers between the seats - you could sit next to your mother and never know. In some circumstances that might

save you from the crashing bore, but meeting others can create the germ of a new idea.

SO

Could this be a metaphor for organisations? Despite open plan offices and matrix management I can think of three workshops I have run in the last year in which one of the issues was people working in silos or just not talking to each other.

Insularity is not good news for creativity, innovation or change. If we are insular, we tend to stop seeing things from different perspectives (indeed, knowing there might BE a different perspective) and can close our minds.

In organisations it can also mean that groups of workers are not aligned - they are working towards different goals and have different values. That's a killer for innovation as it stops momentum.

The question we have to ask ourselves as creative leaders is: *"What should we do to encourage more conversation?"* No, I'm not advocating more formal meetings!

You already know the first place to start, don't you? How many "new" people have you met and spoken to recently?

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Last week, I attended a course and a new networking event, met twenty new people and conversed with most of them. Why? As an independent worker, I have to meet new people to get new ideas, to form business relationships and to avoid getting in to a rut.

It struck me as I wrote the last line that here was a concept for those of you in corporations. How might you make every employee in your team or organisation feel like they own an independent business so they have that same attitude - "I must get out there and meet people"?

ACTION

If you are in a corporation, reflect on that question. If you work alone, what might you do to increase the likelihood of meeting other people?

TO CLOSE

I was half way through this article, with a completely different ending planned, when I picked up a newspaper and found a story containing the quotation used to start this article.

It was about an upcoming speech by Trevor Phillips, Head of Britain's Commission for Racial Equality.

Look at the quotation again. He is writing about a country, about separate communities divided by ethnicity and religion.

But his words could apply to many organisations if we replace "community" with the corporate "division", "ethnicity" with "functional areas" and "religion" with "values"?

(Isn't "division" an interesting word to use in this context?)

He goes on to say:

"We need a kind of integration that binds us together without stifling us. We need to create a nation of many colours which combine to create a single rainbow". (This is reminiscent of South Africa's "rainbow nation")

Now there's a challenge for a creative leader. How might you create a multi functional rainbow in your organisation?

May you find a pot of innovation at the end of your rainbow this week.

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