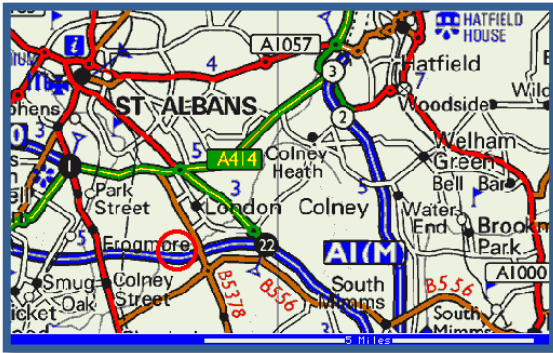


YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 85

If we rely too much on standardisation, what do we do when we want to differentiate or when the market changes...?

Differentiate to Innovate...

"Civilizations in decline are consistently characterised by a tendency towards standardization and uniformity." Arnold Toynbee, British Historian



"Mapping"

Are you standardised?

I have a new woman in my life. She recently helped me navigate across Europe and apart from a brief dispute, (she sent me via a Munich traffic jam when my intuition said to go via Innsbruck) we had few cross words. The children call her Mrs T. (from Tom Tom) and my wife blesses her for saving arguments over map reading.

Yes, we have a satellite navigation (sat nav) system in the car and I'm really impressed with its accuracy (most of the time), the way it reduces the stress of navigating and its ease of use.

However, one day when pulling out of a hotel in France, I noticed that Mrs T. had me turn right, drive up around a roundabout (traffic circle) and back past the hotel again, when it was perfectly

legal and quicker to have pulled out left from the hotel.

I noticed two other cars behind me do the same thing and wondered if lots of people buy satellite navigation, will we see more of this behaviour as people use the standard "best route" and forget how to read a map and the road? I envisage thousands of motorists converging on the same location along the same route at the same time, in starling-like swarms. [For videos of starlings swarming, click [here](#), they are very impressive.]

SO

As I drove, I related this issue to organisations. Organisations seek to automate and standardise, to follow the "best route", in a bid to become more efficient and present a consistent image.

One risk is that every organisation "turns right" at the same time i.e. provides the same service and similar products.

A second risk is that the environment or market changes and the best route no longer works.

These are manageable risks if employees can read the environmental or market map. But if they have lost this skill due to reliance on the "sat nav" of standardisation, the organisation has two

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 85

problems. How to differentiate itself and how to react to market change?

An example is the housing market. We wish to sell our house in a market that has gone from boom to bust in months. Yet estate agents (realtors) still seek our business, quoting methods, statistics and examples from the era of booming house prices.

How do you overcome this issue?

1. Have the organisational equivalent of Mrs T.'s alternative route, when you realise that you are following the same route as your competitors. But you have to realise this before you hit the traffic jam. A periodic review of the environment, customer needs and processes is advisable.
2. Ensure that people in the organisation can still read a business map. This means they know how the business can earn revenue and deliver service, are aware of the organisation's environment, appreciate current customer needs and understand the processes that underlie automation.

ACTION

Consider the points above. Do you agree? What would you add, delete or amend? What is the map that your organisation works to?

TO CLOSE

We noted on the continent that motorway service stations are becoming increasingly standardised across countries. This must make marketing cheaper and logistics more efficient for the fuel companies.

However, high fuel prices, abysmal coffee and lacklustre but expensive food led us to seek out off motorway places to refuel the car and the family.

It was a delight to arrive in Italy and find that they have many small "pit stops" on the motorway where they sell great coffee and snacks at good prices.

Why have they have not succumbed in Italy to the Europeanisation of service stations? I don't know, but long may it last.

Enjoy your coffee...

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Contact John or Kate Brooker:

Speak: +44 (0) 20 8869 9990

Write: hi@yesand.eu

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