

FOUNDER'S SPEAK

Design Thinking is not merely a methodology; it's a mindset, and at its heart lies the transformative power of creativity.



As Design-Thinking professionals, we often emphasize, "To succeed, we must embrace creativity as the driving force of innovation." These words are not mere rhetoric – they are a guiding principle that underlines our approach to Design Thinking.

In the application of Design Thinking, it's always the founder's vision where creativity acts as a catalyst for innovative problem-solving. It's the secret sauce that propels us to think beyond the obvious, explore the uncharted territories of user needs, and craft solutions that leave a lasting impact.

In simplest words – creativity isn't limited to artists or designers; it's an intrinsic human quality. It's the ability to connect the dots that others might miss, to see patterns in chaos, and to envision a future that is yet to be written.

"Innovation thrives where creativity is nurtured."

By understanding and applying creativity, we unlock the true potential of Design Thinking. It enables us to reframe problems in novel ways, to ideate solutions that are not bound by convention, and to create prototypes that embody the spirit of imagination. In every step of the Design Thinking process, creativity is the compass that guides us.

Stay tuned...

Dr. Jimmy Jain
Founder
Society of Design Thinking Professionals

Editor's Speak

Creativity is the driving force behind successful Design Thinking. For me, creativity is the cornerstone of writing that breathes life into words. It paints the picture of vivid imagination, creates resonance, and builds curiosity in the readers to keep reading. It gives me the audacity to experiment with different styles and narrative techniques to forge new paths.

This unconventional fount of creativity consistently yields fresh perspectives and innovative ideas applicable to both my professional and personal life. It epitomizes the essence of Design Thinking – viewing problems from a creative vantage point. Like donning a new pair of glasses, this approach unveils hidden paths in even the most formidable challenges. It transcends quick fixes, embracing transformative solutions with lasting impact, ingrained in long-term strategies, not serving as a temporary Band-Aid.

Whether streamlining daily routines or tackling commonplace issues, creativity invariably holds the key. The lessons I've imbibed transcend the confines of the workplace and seamlessly integrate into my everyday life. It's about infusing creativity into problem-solving, an approach that, in my experience, yields innovative and enduring solutions that withstand the test of time.

Feel free to write to me at afreen@sdtp.co.uk, in case of feedback, input, or if you want us to cover any specific topic.

Afreen Fatima
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Creativity and Design Thinking for Businesses



Creative Thinking

It involves approaching problem-solving in a different way compared to traditional lean thinking. Creative thinking focuses on generating innovative solutions by thinking outside the box. It encourages looking at problems from various angles, exploring unconventional solutions, and embracing a more open and imaginative mindset. This shift in thinking can be a powerful tool for businesses to come up with fresh ideas and solutions to complex challenges. The key capabilities for creative thinking include the ability to see connections between seemingly unrelated ideas, a willingness to take risks, and an understanding that failure can be a stepping stone to success. Transforming an organization into an innovative one involves fostering a culture that encourages and rewards creative thinking and problem-solving.

User-Centered Insights

To innovate successfully, it's crucial to understand the needs and perspectives of the end users. User-centered insight is about looking at problems from a human perspective. This is essential because it helps to uncover the true purpose behind any innovation. It involves techniques and methodologies to gain deeper insights into what users truly need and desire. This could involve techniques like user interviews, observation, and empathy mapping. By understanding users on a profound level, you can design solutions that genuinely address their pain points and desires, leading to more meaningful and successful innovations.

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Creativity and Design Thinking for Businesses

Creative Idea

The essence of creativity lies in searching for novelty and usefulness. Creative ideating is the process of generating novel and useful ideas. It's not just about coming up with any idea but focusing on those that are both innovative and practical. This process unpacks the phenomenon of creativity and provides strategies to enable it. Techniques such as brainstorming, mind mapping, and ideation sessions are often used to encourage the generation of creative ideas. It's not just about quantity but also about quality – selecting ideas that have the potential to make a real impact.

Agile Iterating

Agile iteration, in simple terms, means to 'quick and dirty' approach to developing and refining ideas. It means creating initial prototypes or versions of a product or solution and continually refining them based on feedback. This approach has benefits like rapid progress and flexibility but also comes with challenges like managing uncertainty. Learning to design, evaluate, and execute iterations effectively is a vital part of the innovation process. It helps transform preliminary ideas into desirable, feasible, and viable solutions through an iterative and incremental process.

Organizational Transformation

Bringing the power of design to your organization means not only fostering creative thinking but also transforming the culture of the organization. This involves creating an environment where innovation is encouraged and supported at all levels. It requires understanding the key managerial levers needed to activate a culture that values creative thinking and actions. Organizational transformation aims to make the entire company more innovative, not just a single team or department. It's about efficiently engaging in a process of change to ensure that creativity and innovation become integral parts of the company's DNA.

In the business landscape, harnessing the potential of creativity and Design Thinking is a catalyst for transformation. These conceptual tools illuminate new pathways for problem-solving and innovation. By prioritizing human perspectives, generating novel yet practical ideas, and adopting an agile approach, businesses can adapt to change, create meaningful solutions, and foster a culture of continuous improvement. This evolution at every level of the organization ensures that the spirit of innovation becomes ingrained in its very essence, paving the way for a future of limitless possibilities.

Redefining Customer Experience with Creativity & Design Thinking



According to a study by McKinsey, companies that prioritize design and customer experience outperform their peers by nearly 3 to 1 in total return to shareholders.

How did Airbnb implement it?

Challenge: Airbnb, a global online marketplace for lodging and travel experiences, faced a challenge in ensuring a seamless and delightful customer experience for both hosts and guests. They needed to innovate and enhance their platform to maintain their competitive edge in the sharing economy.

Solution: Airbnb embraced Design Thinking principles to tackle this challenge. They started by empathizing with their users. They conducted extensive user research, which included staying in Airbnb listings themselves to understand the host and guest perspectives intimately. This step involved techniques like in-depth interviews, observation, and user feedback analysis.

The ideation phase led to creative solutions. Airbnb designed a host "Onboarding" program to guide new hosts in creating appealing listings and offered photography services to make listings visually attractive. For guests, they introduced features like instant booking and a refined search interface to simplify the booking process.

To refine their ideas, they implemented an agile iteration process, continuously gathering feedback from hosts and guests to make necessary improvements. This iterative approach allowed them to adapt quickly and refine their offerings based on real-world usage.

Redefining Customer Experience with Creativity & Design Thinking

Results: Airbnb's implementation of Design Thinking led to a remarkable transformation in the user experience. As a result:

- The company's valuation increased significantly, making it one of the most valuable travel and accommodation platforms globally.
- Hosts reported increased booking rates and higher satisfaction with the support they received from Airbnb.
- Guests enjoyed a smoother and more user-friendly booking process, which contributed to increased bookings and positive reviews.

One practical example of how Design Thinking transformed Airbnb's platform is the introduction of the "Experiences" feature. By empathizing with the desire of travelers to have unique and immersive experiences during their trips, Airbnb ideated and launched this feature. It allows hosts to offer activities such as guided tours, cooking classes, and workshops. This new offering not only diversified Airbnb's revenue streams but also offered users memorable and personalized travel experiences.

In short, Airbnb's successful application of Design Thinking principles showcases how prioritizing creativity, empathy, and innovation can lead to outstanding results and a competitive edge in the business world.

Views from Thought Leader - Michelle Anne

Michelle is Harvard Trained in Neuroscience, a national keynote speaker, and CEO of system2 – one of only 300 ICF Certified Master Executive Neuro Coaches in the world. Having studied and taught at Harvard University and with Indian Gurus, Michelle Anne has become widely known as a thought leader and one of the country's leading experts in linking Eastern philosophy with Western neuroscience to help people find opportunities in difficulty. She is known as “East meets West” by her colleagues due to her ability to accelerate transformation in people from the inside out. She has trained over 10,000 people and has over 30 years of experience with federal and state agencies, and Fortune 100 businesses.



“Understanding the brain science underlying creativity allows us to unlock our creative genius, foster innovation, connect unrelated data points, and manipulate ideas all of which are necessary to make your dreams or ideas become a reality. Unlocking secrets of the human brain, helps us to forge new ways forward in this uncertain landscape.”

Join us in this enlightening interaction with Michelle as we aim to explore how the human brain adapts and transforms when confronted with consistently creative environments and challenges. This interaction promises to provide you with a deeper understanding of the incredible capacity of the brain to evolve and innovate in the face of creative inspiration.

How do your insights from neuroscience shape and guide your strategies for cultivating and driving creativity within your work or organization?

Understanding the human brain, the supercomputer inside our head, helps me quickly ease in and out of brain activation states, which helps me adapt and understand subtle patterns, and nuances, make connections between seemingly unrelated things, gain insights, evaluate ideas, stream a flow of information, and absorb many different ideas that may influence my problem-solving. Neuroscience is instrumental in driving creative problem-solving, whether it's about resolving people's problems, leadership, or fostering innovation.

According to you, what are the key neural mechanisms or cognitive processes that play a pivotal role in the creative thinking process?

Each brain activation state has its neural mechanisms and roles in the creative thinking process. For example, norepinephrine, associated with focus and concentration, plays a role in the reason and evaluation states. Neuroscience studies indicate there are 7 creative brain activation states that are part of the creative process. The brain states include; Absorb, Envision, Connect, Reason, Evaluate, Transform and Stream. In order to solve creative problems whether logical, illogical, reasonable, or open-ended questions, we shift from one brain activation state to another to solve the problems.

The absorb and connect states are defined by unfocused conditions, with norepinephrine modulation influencing our attention. There are three principles in the absorbing state: non-judgment, cognitive disinhibition, and delayed judgment, all facilitating access to creative insights. Cognitive disinhibition involves letting more information into conscious awareness and increasing the probability of making new associations between stimuli, a key aspect of innovation. Delayed judgment is essential to suspend premature judgment of ideas. These principles apply to other states as well, making them integral to the creative process. The difference between a creator and a non-creator is the ability to easily shift in and out of each state at will.

What are some practical strategies or exercises that people can incorporate into their daily routines to boost creativity, backed by neuroscience research?

Here are a few practical exercises to boost creativity, supported by neuroscience research:

1. ATTRACTION TO NOVELTY

Aim of exercise: open your conscious awareness to sensory stimuli and enhance your ability to see the world around you. Practice 2x day for 2 weeks.

- Set a timer for 5 min.
- View the world around you with curiosity and without judgment.
- Look for colors, how subtly or drastically color changes, shadows, light on the wall, floor, fabric paint, door frame, furnishing, smell, sense the impulse in yourself,
- The quality of the air, the tenseness of the muscles, and the relaxed shoulder.

2. DELAYED JUDGMENT

Aim: to suspend judgment and increase appreciation for the novelty or perceptual experience through the sense of taste.

- Try a New recipe, restaurant, or online ordering, or try at least one new ingredient.
- Prepare dish when not rushed
- Explore new tastes, do not judge ahead of time.
- Aroma, spicy, sweet, texture, aroma, harmonies, complexities, similarities, contrasts

3. ENHANCING ALPHA THETA with EXERCISE

Aim: increase alpha in prefrontal lobes, and increase creative potential.

Research indicates that during 2 hours following aerobic exercise, alpha and theta waves activity are increased in the PFC. During this period you will find it easier to access the receptive state.

- Think of an open-ended problem you want to solve or a creative dilemma you need to address.
- Do 30 min exercise.
- Reflect on the dilemma.

4. DISINHIBITION Using REM Sleep

Aim: to access a state of disinhibition that allows for information to feed forward from the unconscious into conscious awareness.

Alan Hobson and Robert Stickgold from Harvard Med School, have extensively researched the relationship between creativity and the sleep-wake cycle. They found associative information formed in the unconscious is more likely to be accessed by conscious awareness during the period immediately following waking from REM sleep (a state associated with dreams). Drowsy periods that precede and follow sleep are well-known as doors through which the unconscious mind can be accessed.

- Set an alarm for 30 minutes earlier than your time to wake in the morning
- Think about the open-ended problem you'd like to solve or address.
- Allow yourself to return to sleep
- Immediately begin to record or write your new ideas and solutions down.

Neuroscience has proven a flow of unconscious ideas flow more easily in this state. You have more access to these ideas and connecting data points together.

From your perspective, how does the brain adapt and evolve when exposed to consistently creative environments or challenges?

Consistently creative environments wire the brain to switch easily between different brain activation states. This fosters psychological flexibility and cognitive adaptability, leading to enhanced creativity and a more easygoing mindset. On the other hand, challenges can induce stress, which can lead to quick associations and increased psychological rigidity. This rigidity is counterproductive to creative problem-solving. The neural pathways become less flexible and adaptable. However, daily nurturing and cultivation of brain activation states can counteract these effects, promoting creativity and adaptability.

When neuroscience and creativity converge, the human mind is a limitless wellspring of innovation, driven by the composition of neural mechanisms and the nurturing of cognitive states. As we unlock the secrets of the brain, we unleash boundless creative potential, forever shaping the landscape of possibility.



Having studied and taught at Harvard University and with Indian Gurus, Michelle Anne has become widely known as a thought leader and one of the country's leading experts in linking Eastern philosophy with Western neuroscience to help people find opportunities in difficulty. She is known as "East meets West" by her colleagues due to her ability to accelerate transformation in people from the inside out.



The future envisioned through the dynamic partnership of creativity and Design Thinking promises to be of limitless possibilities. This collaborative approach, rooted in empathy and innovation, empowers us to not only foresee the changes ahead but to actively shape and enhance our world. By weaving creativity in Design Thinking, we unravel complexities and unlock solutions that resonate with the human experience. With a commitment to adaptability and continuous improvement, this harmonious interplay will lead us to a future where innovation knows no bounds, and our most imaginative visions become a tangible reality.

"Creativity is intelligence having fun."

- Albert Einstein (greatest and most influential scientist of all time)

"Design is thinking made visual."

- Saul Bass (American graphic designer and Oscar-winning filmmaker)

"The creative person is willing to live with ambiguity. He doesn't need problems solved immediately and can afford to wait for the right ideas."

- Abe Tannenbaum (President, Tannun Contracting, USA)

"Design Thinking is a creative problem-solving methodology that starts from understanding and addressing human needs."

- Nicola Ulbarri (Associate Professor, UC, Irvine)

"When design is stripped from forming, shaping, and styling, what is left is a process of critical thinking and creative problem solving that is the essence of design."

- Roger L. Martin (Former dean of the Rotman School of Management)