



Mosaic Thinking



The Mosaic That is Information

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<https://bobmorris.biz/the-mosaic-that-is-information>

One of the greatest challenges that organizations will continue to face in months and years to come is this: How to achieve and then retain a decisive advantage in a competitive marketplace that is increasingly more volatile, more uncertain, more complex, and more ambiguous each day?

Here is an excerpt from an article by two brilliant thought leaders, Michael Lee Stallard and Katherine P. Stallard, in which they explain how to “take examples from the team behind the musical Hamilton to see how a culture of innovation thrives when disparate pieces connect.”



Note how innovatively they discuss the value of unlikely sources for breakthrough thinking in innovation.

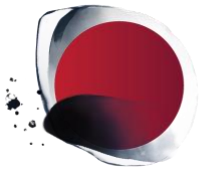
Hamilton took Broadway by storm when it opened on August 6, 2015, and it has not let go. In 2018, the annual Kennedy Center Honors departed from its tradition of solely recognizing individual artists or bands for their contributions over the course of their careers and gave a special award to the musical Hamilton as a piece of work. The Kennedy Center celebrated Lin-Manuel Miranda, Thomas Kail, Alex Lacamoire, and Andy Blankenbuehler, the four key collaborators who brought the show into being, as “trailblazing creators of a transformative work that defies category.” In introducing the award, Gloria Estefan proclaimed that “Hamilton turned the conventions of musical theater upside down, forever changing the look and sound of Broadway.”

No doubt, creativity and innovation were vital to the show’s success. Likewise, they are essential to organizations making incremental and breakthrough improvements that enhance performance and provide a competitive advantage. Yet, according to a World Bank analysis, the rate of innovation as measured by total factor productivity of 21 of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries has declined since 2005. Economists have proposed several top-down solutions to reverse the decline in innovation, including breaking up monopolies and improving competition and competitiveness. However, less attention has focused on the bottom-up action of improving work cultures at the team and department level to spark creativity and innovation.

In our research and work with a wide variety of organizations for nearly 20 years, we’ve found that most innovative work cultures exhibit a high degree of human connection. Unfortunately, most organizational cultures do not tap into the power of human connection, missing out on a host of benefits, including spurring innovation.

So, what can employers learn from Hamilton’s creation regarding fostering an environment that encourages creativity and innovation? Before looking behind the scenes at how the manner in which these individuals worked together brought out the best in each of them and contributed something remarkable to the world of musical theater, let’s consider the nature of innovation.

Mosaic thinking



A closer look at processes that have led to innovation shows that creativity and innovation are social in nature and often arise when a fragment of knowledge from one domain is combined with a fragment in another domain. Pablo Picasso started out as a more traditional painter but then found his signature look by combining the styles of Western art and African masks. As another example, shoes and wheels were combined to create roller skates. And the waffle cone was born when a vendor who was selling a waffle-like pastry worked next to an ice cream vendor at the 1904 World's Fair. The ice cream vendor ran out of containers to hold the ice cream, so the waffle vendor came up with the idea of putting ice cream in the waffles after they had cooled off and hardened. The combination was a big hit.

The process of connecting fragments of knowledge from different domains has been referred to as blending and integrative thinking. We prefer to think of it as mosaic thinking. In conceptualizing the process of innovation, it helps to imagine fragments of knowledge as tiny ceramic tiles.

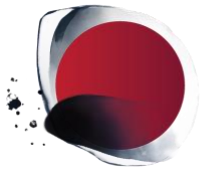
To create a mosaic, the artist's task is to combine the individual colored tiles in a way that creates a beautiful image that only makes sense and can be appreciated when seen as a whole work. Similarly, the innovator's task is to gather the disparate knowledge fragments spread out among different individuals and see the collective potential when the tiles are brought together in a new way.

Connection is key to creativity and innovation

For creativity and innovation to flourish, there must be an environment in which disparate ideas collide and are welcomed. As you may imagine, team and organizational cultures that maximize connection, communication, and cross-collaboration have a higher probability that distinct fragments of knowledge intersect and become the elements that form the basis for new products, processes, and organizational endeavors to come about.

Organizational cultures either support or impair the process of integrating different knowledge fragments. In our work with organizations, we've identified three types of relational cultures that are relevant to innovation: control, indifference, and connection.

In a culture of control, leaders and managers rule over those with less power, control, status, and influence. It is a culture of fear—individuals fear to speak up, take risks, or



make mistakes. In that type of culture, it's difficult to discover new tiles and offer them for consideration because people are less open and less courageous to experiment.

A culture of indifference is characterized by people being so busy with their own tasks that they fail to develop collaborative and trusting relationships. The cultures of control and indifference are both low on connection, cooperation, and collaboration, so they impede the integration of knowledge fragments and act as a drag on innovation.

The optimal culture for creativity and innovation is a culture of connection. We define connection as a bond among people based on shared identity, empathy, and understanding that moves individuals toward group-centered membership. The most effective leaders connect with people when they communicate an inspiring vision, value people as human beings rather than treating them as a means to an end, and give them a voice to express their ideas and opinions. Vision, value, and voice create connection.

In a culture of connection, people feel connected to their supervisor, co-workers, senior leaders, and customers. Those feelings of connection spur communication, cooperation, and collaboration, which create a rich and robust marketplace of ideas and knowledge that helps everyone contribute tiles and even their viewpoint on making the mosaic.

A connection culture that sparks creativity and innovation is what many organizations are missing. Thus, employers must improve their work cultures so that innovation soars.

Reference

- Complete Article: <https://www.td.org/magazines/td-magazine/the-mosaic-that-is-innovation>

Image (search "Mosaic Thinking") courtesy of: [Ashes Sitoula](#) @awesome

The Tim Dukes Method provides an opportunity for self-reflective individuals to cultivate the capacity to receive into consciousness hidden aspects of the self, claiming your unique gifts – ensuring that today's brilliance successfully transitions into tomorrow's wisdom. The Tim Dukes Method is designed and implemented by Dr. Timothy Dukes for determined creatives to ensure long-term viability — as a continuing investment in the well-being of yourself, family, organizations, culture, society, and the Earth itself.