

Innovation From Within



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“The world of reality has its limits; the world of imagination is boundless.”

Jean-Jacques
Rousseau

Kim A. Page has given courses and initiated and conducted creative processes with teams and clients since the beginning of the 90's. Starting out with a Degree in Dramaturgy, the study and practice of how to conceptualize narrative and dramatic elements in a story on stage and in writing, she has connected and developed the interdisciplinary areas of performance, creative writing and voice techniques. Kim is collaborating with EADA and ESCI in Barcelona and with the Master of Corporate Communication at The Copenhagen Business School. In the autumn of 2006 she created a workshop for the Master of Innovative Hospitality Management at Sant Ignasi-ESADE, and as a result this article introduces her approach of how to stimulate the innovative process and attitude.

The workshop '*Innovation From Within*' was designed to stimulate and create the innovative process and attitude. It moves through 5 modules in a chosen order, each with specific purposes.

Starting out, the first tool to discover is *the body* itself. Working with the body, we open up for other ways of relating to ourselves and to each other. Connecting with wordless impulses we learn to listen in a manner that heightens concentration.

Creative writing introduces the distinction and relationship between form and contents, being the basis of analyzing and improving all kinds of different materials. Through using this method an amazing freedom and creativity is captured and manifested, and when sharing texts, the diversity - and at the same time the universality - of our stories are revealed.

Working with *the voice* we can connect with and transform our feelings. The human voice is through its richness of expression incomparable to any other instrument. Here we learn to use elements that are important for conceptualizing - for instance dynamics, timing and the effects of solo - duo - trio - everybody.

After these sessions with body, word and voice, the participants are given an assignment where they are to apply the skills from the sessions in a *concept*. Here the collaboration of both brain hemispheres is important as we start analyzing what we have produced.

Innovation – what?

Innovation is about going places where no one has ever been. Or seeing a well-known phenomenon from a new angle. Connecting disparate components into a new conglomerate. Doing something that no one else has done. Innovation is being original - and applying the originality in a way that makes the discovery functional, beautiful, entertaining or in any other sense worthwhile.

How do we go about being original?

By going inside! Working with the abilities of how to gain access to and liberate our personal ways of expression, my experience has made me conclude that anyone can be innovative. Each and every one of us carries an endless amount of untold stories, an innate joy of expressing him/herself and a myriad of possible ideas and new applications we are pursuing.

However, these potentials are often hidden to us, as we don't have the adequate conditions to activate them. For these potentials to unfold we need to engage in activities that awaken the senses, moving over from the linear and analytical left-brain hemisphere into the simultaneous and holistic right hemisphere, where the creative flow is generated. We need a secure and stimulating atmosphere where we are granted the courage and given the tools to go into the unknown, enabling us to produce new results. And ultimately the material we produce needs to be processed and connected with the context in which we are working and with the goals atmosphere where we are granted the courage and given the tools to go into the unknown, enabling us to produce new results. And ultimately the material we produce needs to be processed and connected with the context in which we are working and with the goals we are pursuing.

The Workshop – body – word – voice – concept - reflection

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After these sessions with body, word and voice, the participants are given an assignment where they are to apply the skills from the sessions in a *concept*. Here the collaboration of both brain hemispheres is important as we start analyzing what we have produced. The preparation of the assignment has three phases: creating material, collecting material and designing the material into a presentation. This process trains the development of standards and criteria that we use when making choices and decisions.

Finally, the process *reflections* are the part of the workshop where the ability of zooming in and out, changing perspectives, is activated. How can we apply the skills we have discovered and developed in our daily lives – both professionally and personally?

The essential leap - from creative to innovative

There is a distance to conquer between creating something new and being innovative.

The crucial innovation skill is applying what you learn in another realm, making new connections, jumping in and out of disciplines, creating crossovers and unexpected solutions. And in order to stimulate these skills we need to strengthen our personal elasticity, doing things outside our comfort zone.

We need to challenge ourselves, for example talk to people outside our social circles, visit places we know nothing about, imagine we are the other sex, standing on our heads with our thoughts...

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Can innovative skills be Taught?

The answer is no! The last phase of the innovative process, in which the different components are to be connected in new ways, is ultimately individual and cannot be taught. Illustrated by an old saying: "You can bring a thirsty horse to the water, but you cannot make it drink. The horse itself has to do the drinking". Or in other words, you can create the conditions and the possibilities, but you cannot enter into another person's head, pull the threads and make the connections.

What we *can* do is create the conditions and supply the stimulus to make innovation possible. Using exercises that make the participant change perspectives, stretching the personal elasticity a little further and giving him or her the courage to activate material from within and the tools to transform it by creating a secure atmosphere with clear guidelines.

On the other hand, when we do this - not even the sky is the limit...

Testimonials from the students in the workshop at Sant-Ignasi-ESADE, November 2006

"I discovered a whole new world that I believe already existed but was 'sleeping' in me... "

"I discovered a way to think out of the box, looking at things from another angle.

Our view on the topic was widened by each other, making me discover new views that I couldn't see in the beginning... "

"We have learnt to be innovative and to think innovative, not only as an individual but also as a group..."

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Literature

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