

Bringing strategy and creativity closer together

Can creatives also be good strategists and good strategists be more creative? The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) thinks yes and to prove its point this August launches a brand new course that will allow people from both worlds to break the mould, learn from each other and grow.

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Jonathan Foster-Pedley, the course director.

The course, aptly titled Creategy, will invite participants to push the limits of what innovation in strategy means in order to develop themselves and their organisations.

According to Elaine Rumboll, Director of Executive Education at the UCT GSB, the course aims to set up a vital ideas exchange between two disciplines that are usually considered to be worlds apart, believing that it's only by creating unexpected links that new ideas will flourish.

"Many of the world's great inventions have come about as a result of creating unusual links between disparate disciplines," says Rumboll. "It is in this same spirit of collaboration that this course will invite delegates to explore how innovative companies and organisations become that way, and what lessons can be learned from the arts, design, creative industries and sciences about innovation."

Course Director, Jonathan Foster-Pedley, says that the case for building the creativity-strategy bridge is supported by research such as the UK Government's recent Cox Review of Creativity, commissioned to look at how best to enhance UK business productivity by drawing on its world-leading creative capabilities.

The Review of Creativity concluded that "creativity properly employed, carefully evaluated, skilfully managed and soundly implemented is the key to future business success".

Further empirical evidence comes from research conducted by the UK Design Council, which found that Britain's fastest growing businesses are making significantly more use of design than their less successful rivals.

The national survey of small, medium and large businesses across the UK showed a clear link between how businesses performed over the previous 12 months and the role design plays in how they are run.

Among rapidly growing businesses, 71% said that design, innovation and creativity were "integral to the firm's operation" or "had a significant role to play". In sharp contrast, 67% of companies which hadn't grown in the previous year hadn't conducted any design activity.

Foster-Pedley highlights that these findings indicate that the traditional boundaries between art and business are blurring and business is in a sense becoming a performance art.

He likens the process of managing innovation and creativity for business success to a tightrope walk.

"Imagine a tightrope fastened at each end, one to a rock of control and the other to the engine of creativity. While the rope is tight we can walk it. But should either the rock of control budge or the engine of creativity falter, then the rope gets slack and the walker falls. Innovation without discipline evaporates into a vapour of ideas and hot air, while control without innovation leads to atrophy, bureaucratisation and irrelevance as markets slip out of touch."

The programme runs over five days from 28 August - 1 September in Cape Town and is offered by the UCT GSB Executive Education unit which recently received a global top ten rating from the Economist Intelligence Unit for its executive short courses.

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