

How would you describe creativity?

Creativity is the capacity to think out of the box, to think differently and to create new alternative solution or originals.

Which features do creative enterprises have?

In general, a creative enterprise creates its future. Think of Pedro Almodovar as an enterprise. He has such a specific and unique style which did not exist in this way before. Nobody in the world can make a movie like Pedro Almodovar. You may personally like his movies or not but you have to recognize his strength. It takes courage to be “creative” because it means being different, being an original, being the first one to do it that way. The most important feature is “openness”. Open to diversity, open to alternative methods, open to experiments and failure, open to think out of the existing limits. Creative enterprises have the flexibility to act and react to a given situation by combining the already known and creating the new.

How can small and medium size companies foster creativity within their organizations?

It is important to understand that a company cannot be creative. Creativity is about people! There are three basic moments in fostering creativity: 1) the management or the owner must be a “creative” person; 2) the company actively seeks and employs creative people; 3) the company facilitates a creative environment. For example it is the corporate culture and a business strategy of a company like 3M to allow the employees to spend 15% of their time developing their “own” projects. Or Google creates such a unique office space that the employees “don’t want” to go home.

Which relationship is there between creativity and innovation in companies?

Diversity is the basis of creativity, creativity is the basis of innovation and innovation is our future. Innovation is the successful market implementation of a creative idea or an invention. Creatives talk about creativity, scientists talk about inventions and business speaks about innovation.

In your opinion, which innovation strategies should implement small and medium size companies?

This is exactly the point. There is no “solution for all” strategy that fits every company. A company is innovative because it develops a unique vision and is ready to “do its own way”. Of course the existing strategies and knowledge are extremely helpful in find the specific way to do business.

How would you define networking?

Business networking is the establishing, retaining and growing of business relationships. Based on our expertise, at Brainswork we define 4 levels of networking: unconscious networking, networking en-masse, goal-oriented networking and brainsworking.

How important is networking in the context of today's businesses?

Depends on how you understand networking. If you reduce networking to exchanging business cards or having another thousand contacts on your social network, then it is a tremendous waste of time and an enormous burn-out factor. I strongly believe that each of us can make a positive difference but when connected we can move mountains. Connecting people around an idea or a vision can benefit a growing number of individuals. This is what we have been doing with IncredibleEurope. IncredibleEurope is about the innovative creative Europe in the year 2049. Considering the existing crisis and fear of the future, we have decided to “create” our future and to this purpose we are connecting influencers. A network of exceptional individuals and businesses is the base of our work. The yearly IncredibleEurope Summit in Vienna (www.incredibleeurope.com) enables changemakers to meet, connect and act for a better future.

Which role does a CNO have within a company?

The CNO facilitates the growth and efficient use of the company's social capital. People and their connections are the biggest asset of a company. The CNO connects people and business within the company, with other companies, and with the consumer. I was a pioneer in this field and I can confirm that the importance of a Chief Networking Officer is growing fast as the successful management of internal and external networks becomes a win or lose factor.

Is there any similar role to that of the CNO in the traditional organizational structures, or do you consider that the figure of the CNO is a must for the survival of enterprises nowadays?

It is a must for the future development especially of large companies. In smaller companies the CNO can sometimes be the CEO or the business development director but considering the growing number of networks to be managed and the fast changing technological possibilities it is absolutely necessary to start developing a CNO position within companies.

Which role does collaboration play in the business world?

In our globalized world we are so interconnected that we simply must to cooperate. Just think of the air transportation industry and the vulcano crisis, or the Greek deficit or many others. But it is even more important for SME to stick together and solve problems together than to fight against each other. My company Brainswork (brains work together) is based on this collaboration principle and it is one of the best examples of this new connected world. Although we are a boutique new business development consultancy with a very small core team in Vienna, we have 132 partners worldwide which means we can activate about 700 people when needed. Based on our 20 years experience we have developed a unique very successful business development strategy – brainsworking. Brainsworking is based on the capacity to transfer knowledge from wide and diverse fields of experience, connect them and create entirely new and innovative result with the goal to foster sustainable business development (which also includes personal development, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation). Brainsworking is a key factor to the growing number of companies with a network – collaboration structure.

Which keys should a company take into consideration in its will to manage diversity within its organization?

The first prerequisite is the sincere willingness to live diversity. It must be embedded in the company culture and not just a few words written on a piece of paper. I do not think you manage diversity. It is the same like creativity: a company can facilitate diversity and with it benefit from the consequences and results of diversity.

Which challenges do you foresee for small and medium size enterprises to face in the future?

This is the best time for SME! The flexibility of action and reaction that SME's have is their biggest asset. Based on the technological development, it has never been so easy to start a company and "conquer" the world. Just think of facebook. Students had a vision, started living it and created one of the biggest "countries" of the world in terms of population size. But personally I do not think that size is a measure of success. The success of a company can only be measured on its own goals and visions. The majority of European companies are SME. This may be seen as a problem or as I see it a fantastic advantage for the future. Connected SME's of Europe! Why not? Maybe you are the one with the next big business idea!