

A VIEW FROM JOSH KRICHEFSKI

Cracking creativity by teaching our kids how to hone and unleash it

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JOSH KRICHEFSKI, CEO, UK 28 FEB 2018

John Cleese once said: “Creativity is not a talent. It is a way of operating.”

As I read [this piece by Rufus Norris](#), the Artistic Director of the National Theatre, I was reminded of that quote. In Rufus’ column, he is making the case that creativity is not something limited to people who are deemed naturally innovative thinkers. And, when teaching the younger generations, it’s not something that should be ignored in favour of the more historically traditional subjects.

While that column is coming from the point of view of something in the creative arts, the same argument is easily transferred into the media industry. In fact the importance of creative thinking is something that spans all businesses.

For us at MediaCom, creativity lies at the heart of what we do. It powers great work that grows our clients. It is combined with science (data analysis, audience identification and targeting), logic (strategy and planning) and communication (client management and the understanding of a brand's goals).

Our teams – creative, planning, execution and all that's in between – work closely together to deliver for our clients. No single specialisms are more, or less, important than the other and often, skills are interchangeable. We don't want to limit anyone by pushing them into a certain area. If they perform well in one skill, the chances are they'll be just as impressive if given the chance to contribute elsewhere. For example, it isn't a case of the creative team coming up with the creative concept – it's more common that everyone involved gets a chance to input.

Don't pigeonhole

Which is why I can't tell you how frustrating it is when I hear people pigeonholing themselves or others as either a "creative" or the "practical" mind.

We are all both of these things because both are behaviours, not physical characteristics. Creative thinking, just like logical skills such as mathematics or programming, can be taught, honed and then executed in every part of everyone's lives. At MediaCom we believe that creativity belongs to everyone, not a creative department.

And I agree with Rufus Norris that this process has to start at a young age. At school, we need to ensure the national curriculum marries a solid basis for skills like maths, English and science, with the less traditional, more vocational and even psychological skills like creative thinking.

Some schools touch on this through art, drama and other subjects. But what about the children who perhaps don't know at this young age how to generate and develop an idea?

These kids are not likely to opt for those more “creative” subjects – which means we instantly put them down a path of either “the creative” or “the practical”.

Once they are in the workplace, they have generally gone down either route and come into a career that fits within the box they’ve found themselves in.

Businesses do also have a big role to play here: creativity can be taught at all ages.

At MediaCom we have a number of initiatives that help our team hone those skills and bring them into their job – whatever job that may be. If they have a specialism, that’s fantastic but if they feel they can contribute in other ways, that’s also great.

We run regular events where all kinds of speakers come in and talk about their industry, their skillset, their career or in some cases their life story. Hearing from people outside of “MediaCom” is invaluable and often sparks a great idea.

We also make sure creative thinking is core to our training and development programmes alongside all the other core skills we believe will give people a fantastic career in the media industry.

When we’re developing a campaign for our clients, we make sure to involve a hugely varied group of people – all of whom are encouraged to put ideas, or even just small thoughts, forward. We also feed back on those ideas, helping people to understand what was great about their ideas and what could be done even better next time.

Ultimately, we try to make sure we have an open, flexible and honest way of working. One which encourages and stimulates great thinking and leads to creative ideas.

Encouraging and unleashing creativity isn’t a job purely for the school system. As a business leader, I also have a role to play. The goal for any business is to reward employees for great performance and help them be the best they can be. Ensuring they are able to use all of their skillset rather than one specialism, creativity or otherwise, is key to

that.

But if we encourage young people throughout schooling and then help them hone their creativity once they enter the world of work, that is far easier and a more natural process for the individual and their employer.

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