

Evaluating and implementing a deliberate creativity framework to enhance retail business performance

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ABSTRACT

In the postmodern-day organisation, acknowledgement of the facts today is that the retail sector has changed dramatically over the past ten years. Boom periods, surplus shopping and good times have ended. We have entered an era of harsh changes, business collapse, mergers, acquisitions and turbulent competitive environments that demand a constant review of business structure, financial performance, business practices and value creation to provide any hope of the ability to trade sustainably into the future.

Responsiveness by retailers in this modern day driven by market need changes causes an almost instantaneous response by retailers to adapt and service the consumer demand. Thus, in evaluation of the underlying reasons for retail market shifts, one starting with the basic premise and rule of the law of natural selection – adapt to the environment, or die. No doubt that customer demand and the competitive landscape dictate effective and quick response from retailers, driving the form, shape, volume and nature of change.

Present day marketplace forces are generally forming a worldwide consumer marketplace that will appear dramatically different since 2010, pushing retailers to bring about fundamental improvements to their methods and business models in order to survive. Conventional campaigns will stop being sufficient to deal with trends which may drive the retail markets into the realm of extreme conditions.

Retailers in South Africa, albeit not directly, are impacted by global shifts and changes. In an environment with increasing competition and the growing demands for operational efficiencies, sustained profits and customer orientation, SA retailers are looking beyond their traditional business models and organisational boundaries to develop and leverage the resources and capabilities of international best practice to create superior value and drive competitive advantages in the marketplace.

Value-add in making things work better for customers, albeit through various business enhancement and improvement initiatives, the longer their relationship will endure with the company. Thus the potential of adopting a deliberate creativity approach within the broader strategic planning process of a company, might well be the value-add activity that provides the catalyst for closing the performance gap, through bridging and

integrating the core concepts of creativity and applying these concepts within real business operations, with the explicit aim of improving business profitability.

To this end, the study originated from a need for a creativity-driven approach to enhance business performance in a retail organisation and not only challenge current paradigms, but redefine furniture retailing and create new furniture retailing operating models. In so doing, using a deliberate creativity-driven approach, that will catapult furniture retail onto a new performance curve that ultimately creates shareholder value through an enhanced customer proposition. The researcher embarked on a journey to establish whether a structured deliberate creativity change management framework could improve a company's competitiveness, effectiveness and profitability; and to what degree a creativity framework can be used to enhance performance within a company.

The research study results and findings, together with the financial performance results revealed that the creativity interventions deployed did in fact enhance business performance (financial, cultural, productivity and organisational behaviour) over the specific study period.

The study also includes the design of a Conceptual Deliberate Creativity Framework, Conceptual Deliberate Creativity Strategy, Conceptual Deliberate Creativity Implementation Plan and an Integrated Beyond Scorecard, which can be applied to any type of retail business across numerous diverse disciplines.

Key concepts: creativity, deliberate creativity, business transformation, performance enhancement, creativity frameworks

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In the words of Michel Quoist, “Human dignity consists in the role we must play in our own perfection. Taking a role in our own self-completion is the highest expression of our creativity.”

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KEYWORDS AND DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Creativity: is the generation of new ideas – either new ways of looking at existing problems, or of seeing new opportunities by exploiting emerging technologies or changes in markets.

Innovation: is the successful exploitation of new ideas. It is the process that carries them through to new products, new services, new ways of running the business or even new ways of doing business. The process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that creates value or for which customers will pay. To be called an innovation, an idea must be replicable at an economical cost and must satisfy a specific need.

Design: is what links creativity and innovation. It shapes ideas to become practical and attractive propositions for users or customers. Design may be described as creativity deployed to a specific end.

Deliberate Creativity: the competence to deliberately develop options, ideas and solutions in order to solve problems, to invent, to innovate, and to successfully cope with given assignments.

Deliberate Creativity Framework: using a directed or structured approach through either brainstorming, pre-planned activities or pre-determined outcomes to facilitate creative outcomes.

Creativity culture: an environment, work ethic, work practices and protocol in search of new ideas, new ways of doing work and different approaches to solving problems.

Change management: is a structured approach to shifting/transitioning individuals, teams, and organisations from a current state to a desired future state. It is an organisational process aimed at helping employees to accept and embrace changes in their current business environment.

Enhanced performance: performance or delivering results at a far higher than expected rate or benchmark causing above normal levels of success.

Creativity programme: a structured intervention to develop new and different thinking in solving problems and decision-making.

Beyonder: a specific group of people that have undergone the Beyonder programme, and move from ordinary to extraordinary in all aspects of life.

Beyonder Programme: a specific training programme to shape the thinking, attitude and behaviour of how to become a Beyonder.

Business performance: a set of management and analytic processes that enables the management of an organisation's performance to achieve one or more pre-selected goals using pre-selected financial or non-financial measures.

Financial performance: a general measure of a firm's overall financial health over a given period of time, and can be used to compare similar firms across the same industry or to compare industries or sectors in aggregation.

Sector: an area of the economy in which businesses share the same or related product or service.

Industry: a specific branch of manufacture or trade commonly similar industries grouped together forms a sector.

Business enhancement: a change, or a process of change that improves something or increases its value, or to rise to a higher degree; intensify; magnify.

Performance improvement: concept of measuring the output of a particular process or procedure, then modifying the process or procedure to increase the output, increase efficiency, or increase the effectiveness of the process or procedure.

Creativity journey: Embarking on a new and different path, by being naturally creative, how to develop a creativity environment and creative nature, and when you access this nature, being yourself, and more peaceful, joyful, vulnerable, congruent, and successful.

Operating model: the abstract representation of how an organisation operates across process, structures, functional competencies and technology domains in order to accomplish its function.

Creativity blueprint: a directed or deliberate plan, programme or systematic approach used to execute a creativity intervention

Furniture retail: the buying and selling of furniture and related products household products and appliances.

Retailing: the act of trade with tangible products and services to a selected target market or consumer base.

Marketplace: the concentration of industries, sectors and businesses in which companies trade and compete in the open market.

Business model: describes the rationale of how an organisation creates, delivers, and captures value (economic, social, cultural, or other forms of value), in addition the process of business model construction is part of business strategy.

Framework: broad overview, outline, or skeleton of interlinked items which supports a particular approach to a specific objective, and serves as a guide that can be modified as required by adding or deleting items.

Best practice / Best in Class: a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark.

Transformation: a process of profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness. Unlike 'turnaround' (which implies incremental progress on the same plane) transformation implies a basic change of character and little or no resemblance with the past configuration or structure.

Organisational culture: The values and behaviours that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization.

Retail landscape: a form of analysis that helps a business identify its primary online and offline rivals. For example, a competitive landscape analysis might start with an attempt to identify and understand competitors, followed by an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses and how the target business can improve upon what its competition is doing.

Creative thinking: a way of looking at problems or situations from a fresh perspective that suggests unorthodox solutions (which may look unsettling at first). Creative thinking can be stimulated both by an unstructured process such as brainstorming, and by a structured process such as lateral thinking.

Workplace: establishment or facility at a particular location containing one or more work areas.

Profitability: The state or condition of yielding a financial profit or gain. It is often measured by price to earnings ratio.

Shareholder value: the value that a shareholder is able to obtain from his/her investment in a company. This is made up of capital gains, dividend payments, proceeds from buyback programs and any other payouts that a firm might make to a shareholder.

Globalisation: the worldwide movement toward economic, financial, trade, and communications integration. Also implies the opening of local and nationalistic perspectives to a broader outlook of an interconnected and interdependent world with free transfer of capital, goods, and services across national frontiers.

Business turn-around: positive, sustained reversal of hitherto prevailing negative conditions, or in the performance of an economy, firm, industry, or market.

Value proposition: an analysis or statement of the combination of goods and services offered by a company to its customers in exchange for payment

Business case: a type of decision-making tool used to determine the effects a particular decision will have on profitability. A business case should show how the decision will alter cash flows over a period of time, and how costs and revenue will change.

Key driver / Key success factor: The combination of important facts or measurements that is required in order to accomplish one or more desirable business goals.

Risk: a probability or threat of damage, injury, liability, loss, or any other negative occurrence that is caused by external or internal vulnerabilities, and that may be avoided through pre-emptive action.

Convergent thinking: problem solving technique in which ideas from different fields or participants are brought together (synthesized) to find a single optimum solution to a clearly defined problem.

Divergent thinking: idea generation technique (such as brainstorming) in which an idea is followed in several directions to lead to one or more new ideas, which in turn lead to still more ideas. In contrast to convergent thinking, (which aims at solving a specific problem) divergent thinking is creative, open-ended thinking aimed at generating fresh views and novel solutions.

Processes: sequence of interdependent and linked procedures which, at every stage, consume one or more resources (employee time, energy, machines, money) to convert inputs (data, material, parts, etc.) into outputs. These outputs then serve as inputs for the next stage until a known goal or end result is reached.

Technique: a systematic procedure, formula, or routine by which a task is accomplished.

Brainstorming: process for generating creative ideas and solutions through intensive and freewheeling group discussion. Every participant is encouraged to think aloud and suggest as many ideas as possible, no matter seemingly how outlandish or bizarre. Analysis, discussion, or criticism of the aired ideas is allowed only when the brainstorming session is over and evaluation session begins.

Pattern: Consistent and recurring characteristic or trait that helps in the identification of a phenomenon or problem, and serves as an indicator or model for predicting its future behaviour.

Trend: a pattern of gradual change in a condition, output, or process, or an average or general tendency of a series of data points to move in a certain direction over time, represented by a line or curve on a graph.

Equilibrium: state of stable conditions in which all significant factors remain more or less constant over a period, and there is little or no inherent tendency for change. For example, a market is said to be in equilibrium if the amount of goods that buyers wish to buy at the current price is matched by the amount the sellers want to sell at that price.

Literary works: Intellectual work expressed in written words, numbers, or symbols (but not audio-visually) in any medium.

Whole Brain Thinking: using all four quadrants of the brain in your thinking preferences, thinking style, decision making and problem solving.