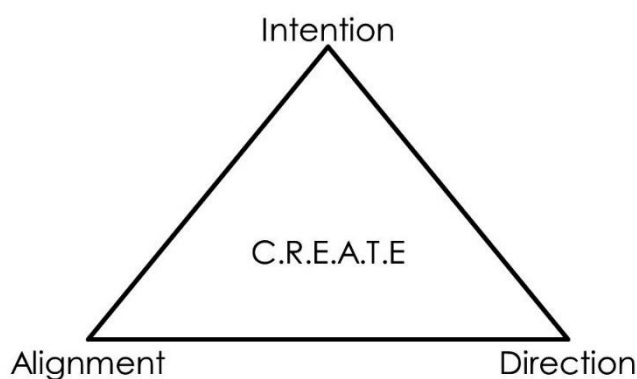


## Developing Creative Brilliance in your Team (Part 2)

By Martin Murphy

### Introduction

In the previous article in this series I explained the **CREATE** model. If you're going to unleash the creative brilliance in your team, you'll need to foster some of the conditions which allow that to happen. These were the freedom to challenge existing paradigms, developing deep relationships amongst the team, exposure to novel experiences, creating associations between disparate ideas and subjects, training and experimentation. These foundations



of creativity then need a process and some tools to harvest new ideas that emanate from the team.

### Step 1 Intention ~ TREAD vs SOAR

The first step is the commitment to being creative and acknowledging that the team will be undergoing a different thought process. We discussed the idea of challenging existing paradigms. That also applies to the way we think. Very few people have the time to think in a way that accesses creativity, we usually follow the **TREAD** pattern:

**Trigger** –something triggers the thought process, either an event or a preceding thought

**Release** of bio-chemicals – feelings are the body's communication system which transport messages around the body at up to 300 metres per second

**Examine**- the messages are passed through various filters, e.g. personality, experiences, beliefs and habits, sometimes referred to as meta-programmes

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**Assign a meaning-** once examined, the feelings are given a meaning

**Decide-** a response is triggered

As conscious thinking takes up a lot of energy, decision making is mostly habitual. Every time you experience the same situation, the ability to respond speeds up as the **TREAD** gets deeper. Walk in the jungle for the first time and it's hard work creating a path. After many times of walking down the same path, the pathway gets consolidated. This is very useful in maintaining the present direction. But in creative thinking this is exactly the opposite of what we want to achieve which is, as Scott Peck describes it, to '*choose the path least travelled*'.

In developing creative brilliance we want people and teams to **SOAR**.

**Suspend judgment-** when faced with a puzzle or innovation question, the first step is to suspend their habitual thinking and slow down the decision making process

**Observe-** take time to research the problem from as many different perspectives as is possible

**Allow-** time for wisdom to percolate up from the inner genius. Let go of the challenge and allow the whole mind to work on the solution often subconsciously.

**Respond immediately-** once an 'Aha' moment or solution has appeared, it's important that there is an entrepreneurial approach to bringing the idea to fruition. This is where real creative brilliance exists. Lots of people have ideas, very few make anything of them.

So the initial step is intention, to set aside time and switch from **TREAD** responding to **SOAR** creative thinking. The next step is alignment.

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### Step 2 Alignment

There is a lot of research happening in the neuroscience of 'flow' states. Flow states are what people experience when they've lost all sense of themselves, they lose track of time and they're able to focus intensely or make new recipes from seemingly unrelated ingredients. As a result they achieve excellence in their work and feel great just doing the work. It's been termed many things over the years including; '*being in the zone*' or achieving a '*zen state*'.

Having studied the research on 'flow' I noticed similarities in other fields such as meditation, hypnotherapy, creativity, sports and coaching. I've also experienced 'flow' whilst writing, doing mundane tasks, playing basketball, being engaged in martial arts and running in the mountains. When experiencing great coaching sessions, I noticed it was because both the client and I would get into the 'zone' and this would result in some great learning, or 'Aha' moments.

The neuroscience of creativity is explained in terms of three parts of the brain either switching off or increasing in activity. The Attention Control Network, responsible for focussing our attention, is diminished in activity when thinking creatively. The Imagination Network, responsible for predicting and remembering, is increased. The Attention Flexibility Network, responsible for deciding what to focus on, is also increased during creative thinking.

But the science doesn't really explain it in a way that makes it easier to trigger creativity. As an experiment, try turning off your Attention Control Network so that you can think creatively right now.

Not easy is it?

After making associations across various fields I came up with another way to explain it. It might not impress the scientists but it's easier for the mind to work with. In fields such as hypnotherapy and Neurolinguistic Programming, metaphors are often used because the brain finds them easier to understand.

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### **Bodymind – Inner Monkey**

If we think about our evolutionary development, we first started off around 50,000 years ago as monkey like creatures. All of our evolutionary and life development stages are encapsulated within our intuitive *bodymind*. Our little child is still within us as is our *inner monkey*. Our *inner monkey* is responsible for survival and motivates us away from pain towards pleasure. It's the instinctive and habitual driver which guides our decision making.

### **Headmind - Inner Judge**

Our next significant stage of evolutionary development occurred when we began to live in bigger groups. Our brain grew in size as a result of a better diet. We developed another style of thinking which is social centric. I call this the *headmind*. A part of us which is concerned with predicting and remembering where danger is and communicating that information to others in our tribe. It never stops talking inside our head from the moment we wake up. This is probably where The Imagination Network fits in. I also refer to it as our *inner judge* because it serves as an inner critic, paradoxically, in an attempt to make us look good within our group.

### **Universal Mind – Inner Guru**

The last stage is our *Universal mind* or *inner guru*. The first two stages make up our personality, the last stage is really an attempt to liberate ourselves from our fear and status driven ego. This stage is noticeable in older people as what matters to us changes as we mature. We care less about our social standing and more about finding a sense of meaning or purpose by contributing to something bigger than ourselves. We're often a lot wiser than our younger selves because we've now experienced a lot more. It's said that you can't put an old head on young shoulders, but you can up to a point, if you decide to do something with a sense of purpose.

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In order for an individual or team to think creatively they have to liberate themselves from their everyday worldview and tap into their creative genius. Unfortunately the inner monkey with its emotional influence, partnered with the inner judge, is five times stronger than the quieter universal mind. This is why we don't often get a chance to think creatively unless we've trained ourselves to do so, or it's a happy accident. The practice of meditation gives us some direction here.



After thousands of years of practicing, meditators of the world are perfectly aware of the *inner critic* constantly disturbing their meditative bliss. They overcome this by learning to relax the *bodymind* and giving the *headmind* something to focus on. It could be a burning candle, a rock or by chanting incantations. As a result, they've refined the practice of tapping into the expanded awareness of *Universal mind*. By achieving this meditators often come up with significant insights about life. Neuroscience is now confirming a lot of what Buddhist psychology purports on the subject of happiness. It's no wonder the Dalai Lama is always smiling.

I know from practicing hypnotherapy that there is a similar process involved, which helps clients enter this altered state.

It entails calming the *bodymind* by asking the client to relax, controlling the *headmind* by counting or imagining a scenario which is both pleasant and relaxing. This allows the client to enter an altered state where the brain waves decrease from the busy-like *Beta* waves to slower *Alpha* and *Theta* waves. This allows the client to connect with the *Universal mind*. Moreover; I've found this applies across sports, creativity, writing and anything that involves 'flow' states. Sir John Whitmore, in his book 'Coaching for Performance' sums it up thus:

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### “Performance = Potential – Interference”

To align the mind into ‘flow’ states of hyper-performance, the *inner monkey* has to feel safe. Once the *inner monkey* is calm it can get on with its job, i.e. ‘performance’ because the *inner judge* no longer feels the need to alert the individual to possible dangers i.e. run ‘interference’. As a result, the individual or team can access an expanded awareness or highly focussed state i.e. ‘potential’, dependent on what ‘flow’ state is required.

The rewards of getting the mind aligned into a state of ‘flow’ is that it produces bio-chemicals that are autotelic, scientific for rewarding and addictive – think ‘runners high’.

The **NEADS formula**, as I call them collectively, are neurotransmitters that allow the brain to align into the varying states of ‘flow’:

**N**orepinephrine gives us focus and plenty of motivation.

**E**ndorphins make us feel great and reduces pain helping us work longer.

**A**nandamide allows us to access disparate areas of the brain to make seemingly unconnected associations. The act of being creative is an excellent way to trigger the production of this neurotransmitter which enhances this lateral thinking, altered state.

**D**opamine is used to direct our attention and focus us onto a particular neural pathway. It is also released as an early motivational boost when we expect to be rewarded when the task is completed.

**S**erotonin is a feel good neurotransmitter that enhances relationships and helps in bonding teams.

So the great benefit of understanding mental alignment is that individuals and teams will not only be more creative and focussed on producing excellent

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work for longer periods of time, they're also going to really enjoying doing so and will want to repeat the experiences over and over again.

The next step is to learn some tools which allow this to happen. In the next article in this series, we'll look at **Step 3: Direction**.