

Title: "Management and Creativity, From Creative Industries to Creative Management"

Author: Chris Bilton

Publisher: Blackwell Publishing

Length: 256 pages

Reading time: 5 hours

Reading rating: 3 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)

Overall rating: 2 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

The central theme of the book is how managers must become more creative in helping their businesses face today's increasingly complex and unpredictable markets. The author focuses on "creative industries," those that deal with new intellectual property; industries that are in the business of communicating ideas, images, and experiences through value networks – the relationships between producers, intermediaries, and consumers. The goals are to organize creativity and manage creatively.

Bilton begins his discussion by defining the creativity process. According to the author, creativity must meet two criteria; it must produce something new, and it must produce intellectual property which is valuable or useful. Therefore ideas that are "too far out of the box" are novel but not necessarily valuable. The creativity he considers important is not that which is found with individuals but with networks of individuals within organizations. He is not concerned with individual entrepreneurial activity. The networks are groups of individuals who collaborate as teams and whose members play multiple roles. They "step in and out of character" as they develop innovative processes or ideas.

The author makes the argument that creativity is a "deliberately managed process" that is grounded in traditional management theory. The non-academic audience will find the middle chapters to be overly theoretical, dealing with how management sets boundaries and manages organizational change. The challenge Bilton wants us to consider is how to successfully take ideas, which he says are "cheap," and develop "value" for the organization through commercialization.

The most interesting chapter in the book, Chapter 7, deals with the shift "From Creative Marketing to Creative Consumption." Bilton argues that creative consumption – takes place when the value of products and services is determined to an ever greater degree by the "interpretation of symbolic meanings by individual consumers." The author presents a cogent discussion comparing traditional marketing (demographics, product features, etc.) to postmodern marketing where consumers reject familiar patterns of identity but form "tribes" that are based on shared rituals and icons that are created through consumption. The goal of postmodern marketing is to construct "a symbolic web of associations" around a product that allows consumers to create their own

experiences which are then shared with other consumers. Customer involvement is now the primary objective. The example provided by the author is that of a nightclub. No longer do consumers go to a club because of its location, entertainment, or ambience. Rather consumers go to a particular club because of the other consumers we might interact with or the “person” we might become if we go there. Tools used to promote creative consumption are blogs, buzz marketing, and other venues that allow consumers to create their own consumer personalities. The message to business is the value in a product is now created at the point of consumption rather than at the point of production.

The main reason for managers of today’s businesses to read this book is to learn about the creative process from creative industries with the goal of adapting these processes to benefit their own businesses. The arguments advanced by the author are carefully structured and theoretically grounded. If you decide to read this book, please set aside enough time to contemplate each chapter before reading the next. Each chapter contains examples to help explain somewhat complicated theories. The greatest challenge to this reader was to understand the author’s definition of “creative.” Each chapter forced me to re-evaluate the meaning of creativity and, after completing the book, I am still none the wiser.

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