Fostering a mindset of innovation

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Harnessing the power of creativity and innovation is crucial if we want to stay competitive, says CEO of DAN Mozambique, João dos Santos.

We live in transformative times. New technology is being developed at lightning speed, and the rise of innovative tech companies means that traditional industries – including advertising – are being disrupted to the point of having to create new business models, consumer segments and ways of communicating.

Agencies that are able to innovate their processes to remain at the forefront of creativity and technology, while being open to collaboration with tech giants, will not only survive, but thrive.

At the core of the collaboration conversation is culture. Instilling and encouraging a culture of innovation in our organisations and teams is essential if we are going to be credible partners for our clients in transforming their business models to compete in the new digital economy.

Creativity vs innovation

According to Creativity at Work, value creation is a result of combining creativity, empathy, and innovation.

In the advertising industry, we often confuse creativity and innovation. While both share common values, and are two of the most valuable characteristics a company can foster, they are in fact different.

Creativity is not the result of just one moment of inspiration. It isn't something that just comes to us, it's something we develop over time. It's the act of being original, of going beyond traditional ideas, rules, interpretations and patterns. Despite what some creatives might say, creativity is a skill that most people can learn, with much motivation, dedication and practice.

Steve Jobs once said, "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards." Innovation is about connecting the dots that other people miss. Many people associate innovation with new gadgets and technologies, but it's much more than that. Ideas, information, and inventions that can add or improve value are innovation.

So, what's the difference between the two? Perhaps Business Insider said it best:

"Creativity is the unleashing of the potential of the mind to conceive new ideas"

"Innovation is about introducing change into relatively stable systems"

In other words, innovation is putting great ideas into action. As such, a highly creative environment that lacks innovation will be completely ineffective.

So, how do you boost your chances of bringing out the best in your teams?

Tips for fostering creativity and innovation

1. Create a stimulating atmosphere that allows people to have fun, focus and relax while they work. Open spaces, artwork, games and plants can all help achieve this.

2. Provide structure and guidance that will allow everyone in the organisation to see the bigger picture. When people understand business goals, they'll be more likely to work towards those goals.

3. Equip your teams for success. Make sure they have all the tools and training they need to achieve great things. Remove barriers to success.

4. Allow employees the freedom to make choices and be autonomous. Giving people space allows them to feel more comfortable and encourages creativity and innovative thinking. Micro-managed employees feel like they're constantly being critiqued and can't produce their best work.

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