A review of *Unlocking Creativity: How to solve any problem and make the best decisions by shifting creative mindsets*

Hot Books in Creativity Assignment

Current Issues in Creative Studies 625

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11/8/20

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**Hot Book Choice:** Roberto, M. A. (2019). *Unlocking creativity: How to solve any problem and make the best decisions by shifting creative mindsets*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

What does a painting of an unclothed woman, the reality-show *Survivor*, meditating members of the Beatles and the Nobel Peace Prize genius behind CRISPRs have in common? They all are used as fascinating and poignant examples of the power of creative mindsets in *Unlocking Creativity: How to solve any problem and make the best decisions by shifting creative mindsets.*

*Unlocking Creativity* is a nonfiction examination of the six organizational mindsets (Linear, Benchmarking, Prediction, Structural, Focus and Naysayer) that business management researcher and professor Michael A. Roberto claims to block creative thinking. To support his thesis, Roberto masterfully weaves in pop culture references and anecdotes between a variety of complex and cutting-edge research in the field of creativity. This culmination of knowledge and storytelling set to the framework of the six major mindset themes assists the reader in understanding and ideally overcoming the barriers that many organizations (especially in a larger corporate setting) experience when attempting to infuse creativity and innovation into their organization.

As we have learned from Ruth Noller’s classic creativity equation (Creativity=*f*(attitude)(Knowledge x Imagination x Evaluation)), the function of attitude is in many ways, the great amplifier of creativity. I appreciate that Roberto identified attitude as a central theme to his book and takes the time to walk the reader through the basic building blocks of creativity through his six mindsets. Roberto’s research-backed work summarizes and reinforces much of what we already know about the field of creativity, especially in regard to mindsets.

For example, he discusses the importance of using ground rules like deferring judgement when brainstorming in order to foster a creative working and thinking environment. He shares that creativity is non-linear and the need to sit in ambiguity, even when corporate profits pressure the need for a more linear approach. He also emphasizes the need for a dynamic balance between both divergent and convergent thinking, not just one or the other.

However, Roberto also adds in unique perspective to mindsets that challenge creativity in utilizing his background in business management. For example, he discusses how competing by following other business models and innovations (or benchmarking) can lead to a stifling in developing original, and often, more profitable ideas. One noteworthy idea mentioned was to take any product or service and brainstorm any indirect and less obvious potential competition they may encounter. A timely example of this is how the airline industry could be potentially be impacted by online meeting platforms like Zoom. Having access to such platforms would reduce the need for air travel to meetings, as we have now seen come to full fruition with the advent of COVID-19. Indeed, it is this type of creative thinking that would prepare organizations for potential threats and diversify their perspective to welcome ideas that would infuse new, useful ideas that could defend against these threats.

Another interesting exploration of organizational mindset by Roberto was of an organization being able to predict the outcome of a creative idea. While we can use a tool like PPCO in the creative problem-solving process to imagine potential scenarios in implementing an idea, Roberto cautions organizations in having the need to fully control and understand what that vision could be in order to act on the idea.

An interesting example of this was illustrated by the novel business idea of Trader Joe’s. This unconventional, compact grocery store with a limited selection of private-label items has developed a cult-like following. On paper, the prediction for such a unique business concept could dissuade an investor, untrained in creative thinking and creative mindset, to get involved. However, the reward of following through such a unique idea has paid itself in dividends, as is the case with this beloved (especially by myself!) and highly profitable grocery store.

Though *Unlocking Creativity* provides rich examples of anecdotes and research, it would have been helpful if advice and tactics from each chapter were pulled out of the text more directly for the reader. Providing a summary of key points at the end of each chapter or even additional direct insight from Roberto himself would give the reader a clearer sense of action steps needed to give this carefully curated research the legs it deserves.

This book greatly compliments the learnings from the ICSC program and applies these teachings in contemporary, entertaining and tangible ways that I think could transcend the business world it was intended for. I would highly recommend this book to those interested in organizational development and who want to learn more about how our acknowledging our attitudes and shifting our mindsets, even at an organizational level, can greatly impact our ability to create unique, profitable and sustainable impact.