



Management and Performance Associates | October 2012

Create, believing

Over the last few weeks, LinkedIn has surprised us with a lovely new feature. People in our network are endorsing our mastery over a demonstrated skill or competence, which comes from LinkedIn's sophisticated algorithm system, as they analyze our résumé. In addition, the system allows our associates to suggest new competencies for us! **Clearly a creative tool**, which inspired us to write this article.

If you were asked to define creativity, you could say that "Creativity is the generation of **new, unexpected, set apart from others, useful and attractive ideas**" (the only way to survive in the 21st century). The new LinkedIn tool meets these conditions. Let's see:

1 | New and unexpected

In the past, we decided which competencies to list, up to a limit of 50. Now, people who have professionally interacted with us may suggest additional competencies. Nobody is expecting that window to show up on their screens, but it unexpectedly does.

2 | Set apart from others

In addition to allowing us to fine-tune our competencies, it causes us to reflect on our contacts, strengthening relationships. Up 'til now, profiles in social networks were created by the users themselves. Now, others add information.

3 | Useful and attractive

The pop-up window design is good, due to its size, colors, images and layout. Additionally, it's a way to obtain a third party reference (who doesn't need one of those in today's competitive environment?) and to contact old and forgotten colleagues.

But... how do we "create" something?

To create something new, unexpected and

different from the rest we need to move away from the known path; to detach from the security of past experiences and proven ways; to abandon the comfort zone, and avoid sticking to "copy and paste."

To create, we need to follow a path that requires new and challenging perspectives, such as:

Changing your behavior

Corporate culture is driven by behaviors that are expected, reinforced and rewarded. Since we create the culture, it will definitely be impacted by our own *beliefs* (what we believe is our truth) and our *values* (what's important to us and to the organization). Before changing a behavior, we need to rethink our beliefs and to question our absolute truths and convictions.

LinkedIn questioned *Why limit the competencies to 50?... Why solely defined by the user?... Why not enrich them with other points of view and the experience of other contacts?...*

One of the most valued competencies today is the ability to initiate change. Challenging the *status-quo* is one of the possible paths especially when the only reason to do things one way is because "we have always done it like that."

Try to question your beliefs and what you consider important. You'll be surprised by the flow of ideas. Consider that even small ideas may have an outstanding impact.

Your perspective is not the only one

We don't see things "as they are," but "as we are," filtering experiences through our mental models so that we can interpret them. Experiences, by themselves, are neutral, as they have no meaning. *We assign*



meaning to an experience as a consequence of our interpretation.

The same way that we are fascinated by this new LinkedIn application, there are others with exactly the opposite feeling (you can check several online discussion forums, where participants emphasize their side of the argument). This is what the creative act is all about: be prepared, as some people will simply disapprove of your wonderful idea.

Connect more with the Arts

According to an article published by the Wall Street Journal, the arts, in general, act as a model for organizations. Artists master competencies that people in the business environment do not such as dealing with ambiguity and the ability to question models.

Visiting a museum or attending a concert may help you to understand how to navigate ambiguous and/or gray spaces in 'your' environment.

The LinkedIn new tool does that, "suggesting" some competencies that perhaps are incorrect, and will not be accepted by the user. Of course, when there is ambiguity we also need elements which provide reassurance, controlling and limiting risk.

Start to create

Creative people can be introverted or extroverted, conservative or liberal, convinced or unsure of themselves. There is not a type more creative than another. *A creative person is one who tries to create, with a tolerance for mistakes, rather than being paralyzed by them.*

We don't need a business plan to start creating. All we need is the capacity to see beyond what is available, and for that, we need to connect ideas, continue to work on them, search for behavioral patterns, see them in perspective, and question what works and what doesn't. The

recommendation is to move from what things "are" to what they "mean." Focus on how it connects (or not) with the rest, its possibilities and don't forget to allow for mistakes (errors can be a multiplier for new ideas).

Embrace diversity

A creative team adds multiple perspectives, mental models, points of view and experiences. *Synergy is obtained outside the box, not inside, without limitations.*

To create, get the support from your staff, peers, bosses, clients, even from your adversaries. Consult, try it out, ask for feedback, get different perspectives, and improve it.

More often than not, (especially in the corporate world), we hear phrases such as "I am not creative" or "she is the creative person around here." Sadly, this mindset limits us, since one way or another, everyone **is creative, or everyone can be creative.**

To generate an idea, which is new and unexpected, set apart from others, attractive and useful, first we need to believe in our creative capacity. Then—and only then—will techniques help.

Want to further explore the topic? Read Austin Kleon's short and entertaining book "Steal Like an Artist" (www.austinkleon.com).

See you next time. We welcome your feedback.

To know more of our training programs, please send us an e-mail to:

sergio.pereira@mapa-way.com or sonia.dondice@mapa-way.com

Visit our website:

www.mapa-way.com