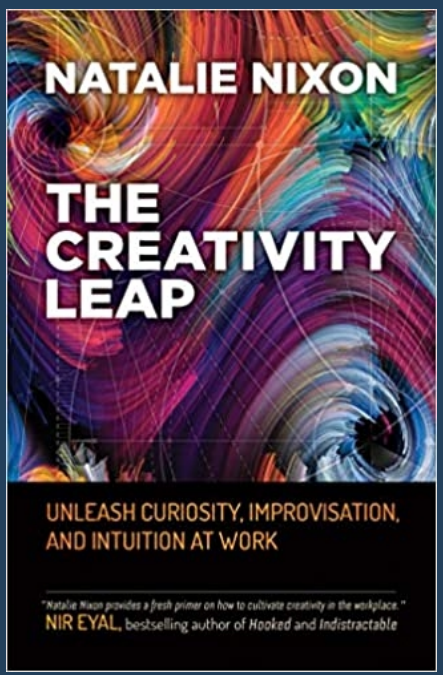

The Creativity Leap

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Author: Natalie Nixon
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How many times have you said "I am not creative", "I wish I was as creative as that person"?
Well, if that has ever happened in your life, it is probably because you perceive creativity as an extraordinary talent that only belongs to a group of people.
What if we tell you that us human beings are programmed to be creative?
During the early school years, we have our creativity being broadly stimulated. However, over the years, the sciences subjects start to get more space and arts ends up being left aside.
And it is thanks to the lack of creativity stimulation that we get stuck when we need to innovate. Innovation is the key for success and in order to innovate we need to be creative.
But did you know that there are practices that can increase not only our creativity competence, but also that of our coworker's?
In this summary, the author talks about the importance of creativity in the business environment and teaches strategies to stimulate your employees to have creative ideas.

Main ideas of the book

To make a creativity leap an innovate you need to understand:

- The concept of "creativity leap".
- Creativity as a human competency.
- How the combination of inquiry, improvisation and intuition will help you to develop creativity in your work environment.
- The importance of making creativity part of the company's culture.
- How integrating wonder and rigor to your daily routine will lead you to have innovative ideas.

To whom is this book indicated?

As the author mentions, this book is indicated for leaders and organizations that are looking for more effective and accessible ways to innovate.

It is also essential for those who need to find new ways to encourage creative process in their professional lives.

Overview of the book

What is creative competency?

Natalie Nixon explains that anyone can be creative and become more creative, because creativity is a human competency.
Creativity, according to the author, is the ability to question whether there is a better way to or a correct way to do something.
To exemplify all the possible professions in which we can find creative minds, the writer presents that outstanding professionals are the ones who have learnt to question whether there was a better way to their job.
You might still be thinking that creativity is something inaccessible. That 's ok! We were taught since school to think like that.
Well, creativity looks like something hard to access because it is an ambiguous and complex process. The lack of a step-by-step guide makes creativity an uncomfortable process.
But what if there was a guide that we could follow to become more creative? The author explains that truly creative people often apply the 3I's – inquiry, improvisation and intuition.

But what are the 3I's?

The 3I 's are tactics to produce creativity.

The first I – Inquiry

Whenever something awakes our curiosity is because we have a gap in our knowledge. Inquiry occurs when we start to question, think and look for information about what is unknown.
If we are not able to inquire about issues that we still don't know, we will be incapable of moving forward in the process of creating innovative ideas.
The inquiry process triggers the leap that bridges the gap that represents the unknown. This leap is named by the author as "creativity leap".

The second I – Improvisation

You have certainly come across a situation that did not go as planned and the only solution was to improvise. Well, improvisation is one of the tactics to become more creative.
Improvisation happens when we develop ideas from the obstacles. To improvise, we need to have freedom to experiment, but we should also follow the rules established in the environment.
When we observe and adapt, we start a process of improvisation.
The fun of improvising is creating something completely new out of elements and structures already known.
According to Natalie, improvisation is all about the remix. It is transforming circumstances and elements that we have into something new.

The third I – Intuition

Who has never had that feeling in the gut that made you feel like something should or should not be done? This feeling is an unconscious wisdom that recognizes patterns that our conscious mind is not able to assimilate, and it is popularly known as intuition.
Intuition is a survival tool. It allows us to feel whenever something is wrong and makes us analyze the external signals in order to make decisions.
Sometimes intuition can feel irrational and difficult to trust, but you should know that great leaders and thinkers usually rely on intuition's power.

As Albert Einstein said:

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift, and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift."

How can the 3I's help in the creative process?

The author claims that the practice of these three strategies offers a new way to explore our creativity and increase our creativity quotient.
Our creativity quotient can increase if we exercise it.
Natalie Nixon not only claims that we can exercise our creative competency, but also suggests individual and collective exercises that can help to make creativity leaps.
Through the application of these three tactics in our daily lives, we can exercise creativity and thus achieve innovation.

The concept of "Creativity Leap"

The main theme of this work as the title suggests is "Creativity Leap".
But what is the definition of this concept and why is it so important?
Well, according to the author, the word "leap" refers to a movement that always propels us forward. Leaping requires a great deal of energy and trust in the unknown.
And what does this have to do with creativity? Innovative ideas are those that move us forward. Therefore, creativity leaps are the fuel for innovation.

But how can we make creativity leaps?

The first step is to let go of the bounding beliefs that we have learned since school. It is not possible to innovate if we are constrained to the systems and structures.
No, this does not mean that systems and structures are not necessary. Data, technology and structures are important, however, we can not forget that creativity is essential for any creation.
One key point to make a creativity leap is to develop the ability to see and listen with wonder and rigor so we can understand the ambiguity and uncertainties that can arise in the development of a work.
As we have already seen, inquiry, improvisation and intuition are essential tools for us to be able to make the creativity leap. And they do not need to be followed in any particular order.
Thus, the author reinforces that for us to truly make a creativity leap we need to align those strategies with wonder and rigor.
Wonder is the catalyst for the leap. Rigor is the strategy that helps us to sustain the momentum of the leap.

Wonder and Rigor

Natalie explains that wonder is our ability to pause, dream, wonder and question. Rigor on the other hand is what ensures that we pay attention to details, and spend our time on a task without losing our motivation.
Both wonder and rigor are essential for creativity.
The author defines creativity as the ability to toggle between wonder and rigor to solve a problem.

Wonder

In order to wonder, we need leisure. This may not be something possible, once we are so stuck with deadlines. Creative leisure requires wait, and for some people waiting is difficult. However, we need to know how to stop to wonder about our options.
To explain how wonder is related to leisure, the author mentions something that her mother used to say:

"When you don't yet know what to do, do nothing. Just wait. There are always variables shifting around us."

Although it sounds crazy, wonder requires that we pause to question "What if…?", "Why not…?". Questions open up a world of possibilities and possibilities are the source of our inspiration.

Rigor

If wonder is like watching a magical theatrical performance, so rigor is the backstage machination.
Only through rigor are we able to move forward with our ideas. When we get into the moment of leisure and we ask "Why not…?", "How does this…?", we give the first impulse to the creativity leap. Rigor is responsible for completing the leap that we started.
Rigor is the commitment that we need to move forward.
We need to study the rules, structures and limits that are set for our projects to understand how far we can go. Limits, structures and rules are essential for us to understand how to start our projects.
After all, to become an expert on what we set out to do, we need to focus on details. Rigor requires focus, without focus we are incapable of wonder, let alone completing the leap that starts with wonder.
Wonder requires an active, rigorous, steady, disciplined approach. Or, as the author would say, wonder requires rigor!

Creativity in the workspace

Now that you have found out how creativity works and which tools and strategies we should use to develop it, you might be wondering how to stimulate creative processes in your company.
Generally, the organizations already have the strategies that favor rigor, but they usually lack the moments of creative leisure that contribute to wonder.
Well, how about we check some of the advice that the author gives on this book to help companies take the creativity leap needed in order to adapt to the constant changes of the world?

Don't fall into the tyranny of "no"

There is a very common path that companies usually take when they start to grow. The more a company grows, the more it gets stuck with risk management, and it starts more and more to fall into the tyranny of no.
The problem is: in order to make creativity happen, we need to change the "no" for "yes".
The more "no" a company imposes, the more it fails to cultivate the creative processes in its employees.

Innovation lab is different from innovation culture

Come on, how to start encouraging creativity in my employees? First, does your company have an innovation department, an innovation lab or an innovation studio? If the answer is yes, great! This shows that there is a desire for change.
But here comes the catch. Having an innovation center does not generate an innovation culture in the company. Implementing an innovation culture requires the integration of a new mindset on the organizational levels.

Well, it is a fact that innovation culture is essential to ensure innovation in the company. But do you know what innovation really means in business?
In the business sector, innovation is invention converted into financial, social, and cultural value.
Therefore, it is not enough to launch a new product. If you are really willing to innovate, then you need to encourage processes, systems and experiences in the workspace that allow your employees to use their creativity and start the creation process.
Then, don't be afraid to think outside the box. You must leap from the traditional to a new territory where creativity can reign.

Give your employees time

Are you willing to allow your employees to take a break to wonder?
We all know that companies have deadlines and goals to be met. However, pausing for wonder stimulates new questions about how to be and to do things.
There is always a better way to be or do something!
So, don't be one of those companies that claims to accept questions, but make the employees uncomfortable when they ask them. The process of inquiry is essential for employees, and they shouldn't feel inferior or at risk for making questions.
In fact, incentivizing wonder leads workers to learn how to ask better questions.
When the leaders encourage inquiry, the employees feel safe not only to ask questions, but also to share their ideas.

Encouraging diversity

Another suggestion, that already happens in Brazil, is to hire people from different genders, ethnicities, ages and social classes. Different people have different insights.
People with different skills and backgrounds have more bright questions. The more diverse the team contributions, the more innovative results are achieved.
Here's a great advice from the author! There is no use in searching for diversity if you are always hiring people from the same universities and organizations. Potencial leaders will not be found in obvious places. Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg, for example, dropped Havard.

Trust your employees

Are your employees prepared to act when something doesn't go as planned? Do you know how to encourage improvisation in your company? As absurd as it sounds, having employees who know the right time to improvise is essential.
It is important to ensure that the company's rules are settled in a way that allows the workers to feel empowered to solve problems at the same time as they happen.

Trust yourself

Would you be capable of following your intuition even if data was against you? Following intuition at work is not always an easy task.
Although data is essential for industry, data is only the result of human actions. And is there anything more unpredictable, imperfect and inconsistent than human beings? That's why we often need to combine data analysis with our intuition. Do you know who won by doing this? Steve Jobs and Einstein.

Connect with your clients

Have you ever thought about using archetypes to connect with your clients? When brands insert archetypes into the message that they want to give, the connection with the client is created almost instantly.
Think about Dove, for example, they invested in the archetype of the woman that does not see herself in the beauty standards to make their campaign. The result? It boosted their sales and marked everyone's heart with the campaign.
Ask yourself who your client is and how to connect with them. Archetypes make us think through problems in order to create a solution and sell a product at the level of human connection.

Change what is traditional

Have you ever thought that changing the way you relate to your employees can encourage creativity leaps in the company? Meetings, for example, don't need to be held always in the same way. Actually, meetings generally tend to discourage workers.
Natalie Nixon says that a way to engage your workers during meetings is by giving an opportunity for those who did something different, or had a creative idea, to present what they've done to everyone.
This is a fun way to celebrate achievements in the company by giving credit to those who deserve it!

What about setting a time to play?

No, we are not telling you to give half an hour for your employees to play blackjack at the cafeteria.
Although, this is not such a bad idea...
Jokes aside, moments of relaxation are essential for our brain.
In this way, encourage fun moments at the company. The stress relief helps us to have the calm needed to wonder and the necessary energy to execute our ideas with more joy.
Moments of fun and calm are as important for our brain as physical activities are for our sleep.

What do other authors say about it?

You have probably heard about Pixar, right? When it comes to creativity, the book "**Creativity, Inc.**" is all you need. Want to know why? Because in it, Ed Catmull, creator of the world's first movie made with a computer, tells how he transformed Pixar into a company marked by innovation.

Well, this summary must have made it clear that creativity is the skill of the future. Therefore, if you want to learn more about how to better develop this competency, what about reading "**Out of Our Minds**"? Ken Robinson presents different strategies to make our imagination, creativity and innovation increase.

Now, if you are interested in learning what questions we should ask to adapt to the constant world's changes, why not read the book "**A More Beautiful Question**"? Warren Berger will teach you in this book how to rescue your inquisitive spirit to start coming up with innovative ideas!

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

The strategies to develop creativity you already learned, but what about remembering it?

- **Inquiry:** Ask questions! "What if...?", "Why not...?". Through inquiry we can find better and more effective ways to solve our customer's problems.
- **Improvisation:** Did something not go as planned? Improvise! Explore new possibilities! Find new ways to do what was being done and have gone wrong.
- **Intuition:** Remember that intuition is your unconscious brain recognizing patterns and sending messages to your conscious mind. Don't rely one on physical data, trust the data your brain is giving you as well.
- And never, **ever forget about wonder and rigor**. They are essential for the creativity leap.

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