

"CREATIVITY JAMBOREE" IN LONDON

..OR - LEARNING ABOUT 'CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING' IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

From 3rd to 4th of July 2008 the 8th "UK Creativity Jamboree" on applied business creativity took place in London, hosted by the Centre for Entrepreneurship (cfe) of the University of Greenwich Business School in London.

Held in the historical site of the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, an inspiring and fascinating conference location paved the way for a most creative exchange during the event.

The director of the cfe, Dr. Khanes Rajah, who has been an international creativity practitioner and management consultant for the last 20 years, kick-started the conference followed by a musical opening with Chirs Williamsons 'Song of the soul' overtitled with the 'Song of Creativity'. Singing this song together in a group of 40 people I never met before was as ice-breaking as engaging, mostly because it was guided and gorgeously sung by Mary Ann Smorra, Professor of Education at Georgian Court University in New Jersey.

The original version can be found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVyWFFhmx6k&feature=related>

The intensity of real exchange between participants was extraordinary and was enabled through practices like the 'Cobikky Break', that stands for a mixture of 'Coffee and Biscuits' combined with the method of speed networking. Thereby the 'recommended' time for a talk is about 3-5 minutes. After that time participants may swop to a new conversation partner without offending the previous partner by that. This very open minded and inviting way of making new contacts and learning from others initiated a valuable exchange that for myself was of real added value and that I never before experienced to this extend.

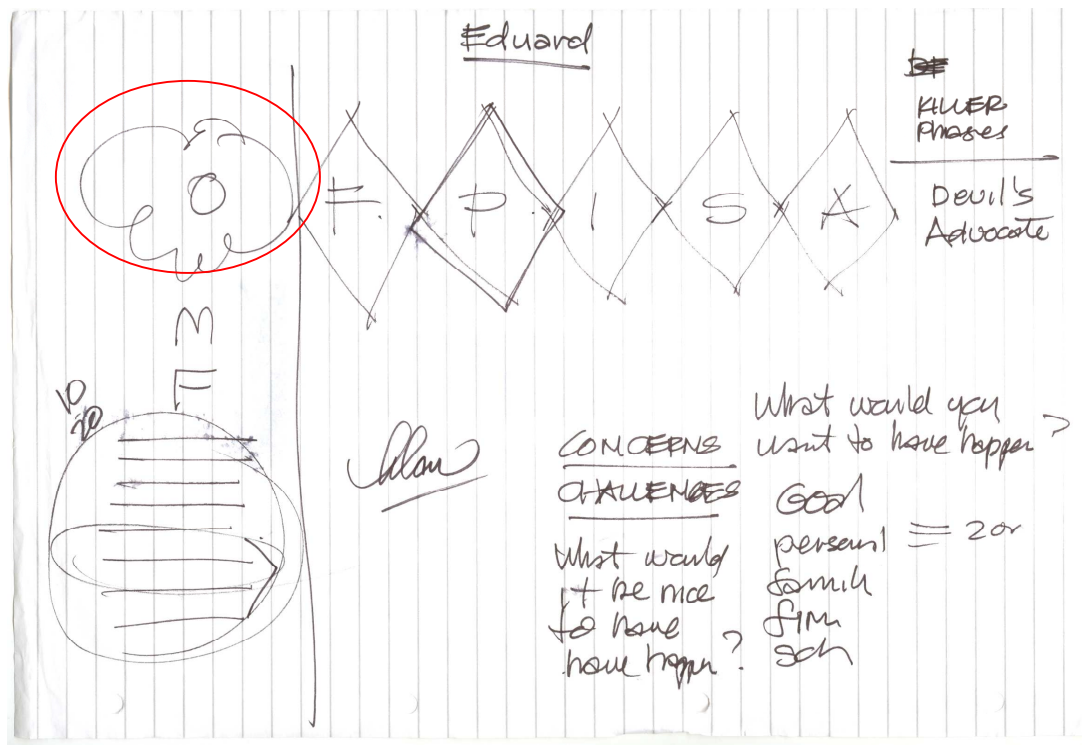
Regarding the many international experts in the field of Creativity and Innovation, such as **Kobus Neethling, president of the Soth African Creativity Foundation**, that presented his approaches to business creativity from 'the mind and the heart', I would rather recommend you their publications and websites than daring to repeat their ideas within this report.

Rather I'd like to give my personal highlights that influenced my understanding of Creativity in the field of entrepreneurship and presented new ways of seeing and thinking about things. Through my work in the COEUR Project I brought a specific question to the conference that I was hoping to approach through expert exchange during my stay:

There is a bunch of creativity techniques to generate new ideas on existing problematics. But if someone would like to pursue an entrepreneurial activity and start from scratch with a good idea, what ways or techniques can help to find a starting point?

A good advice was given by **Robert Alan Black** from the USA that is an international creative thinking consultant, who is 'creatively tooling around the globe' since many years through more than 46 countries. His website www.cre8ng.com provides a rich and colourful source of creativity techniques.

As you can see on the scanned picture below Alan briefly explained the model of '**creative problem solving (CPS)**' to me, that was originally developed by Alex Osborn and Sydney Parnes in the 1960's. Osborn and Parnes helped develop a comprehensive educational programme for the 'Creative Problem Solving Institute (CPSI) in Hadley, Massachusetts, the world's longest-running international creativity conference.



Picture by Robert Alan Black

The CPS-model presents a cyclical process which basically consists of five steps, but sometimes a preliminary step is added called '**mess-finding**' or '**objective-finding**' (the above encircled 'O' prior to the row of diamonds). This phase involves locating a challenge or problem to which the model is applied and presents exactly the phase my question centered on. According to the CPS-model the phase of objective finding is approached through a **positive formulation** of stem sentences like "What would be nice to have..or have happen?...I wish....It would be great if...". Referring to the application of the model on entrepreneurial ideas, this proceeding will help to locate a challenge or a problem on the market and delivers the basis to subsequently apply the CPS.

But how does the CPS itself work?

The Osborn Parnes Creative Problem Solving method was introduced during the conference by **Branko Broekmann**, a sculptor, innovation advisor and founder of the consulting firm 'CreAspect' in Italy. To briefly explain its basics, I will use Alans drawing: The picture shows a row of diamonds, where there is one capital letter within each diamond that stands for one phase within the Problem solving cycle.

- F - Fact** Finding
- P - Problem** Finding
- I - Idea** Finding
- S - Solution** Finding,
- A - Acceptance** Finding

The form of the diamond symbolises the proceeding within each phase which is first "<" **divergent** – seeking for a huge quantity of ideas - and subsequently ">" **convergent** – which means making choices, deliberating and improving your ideas.

A basic attribute of CPS is that it is a cyclical process, that is never closed or finished and to constantly improve and innovate the existing and to solve upcoming challenges.

Details on the stages of CPS can be found on the pages of the **Creative Problem Solving Institute (CPSI)** - <http://www.cpsiconference.com/home.cfm>.

Another very interesting workshop that unfortunately suffered from a rather uncomfortable and noisy location, but offered a stunning view to the sights of London, presented the boat trip on the river Themse where parallel workshop sessions were offered. While the group on the upper deck obviously seemed to have fun in the '**Laughing fit**'- session with **Brenda Spiers** from the UK, a certified Neuro Linguistic Programming Practitioner, my group was challenged to work on African philosophies, that are increasingly integrated into management and leadership styles and bring together important ideas on human behaviour. The philosophies treated were '**Ubuntu** - I am because we are' and '**Lekgotla** – a leader is a leader by the people giving rise to authority'. Both are practised in Africa. Within small group discussions we tried to work out the philosophies' core values and to transfer these to Creativity and Entrepreneurship, what lead to rather philosophical discussions and the general agreement that the workshop time was far to short!

Finally, a fascinating performance was given by **Dimis Michaelides** from Cyprus. Admitting to be a member of the magicians club, he managed to explain the nature of teams by an impressive handling of several metal rings, and further eyecatching sleights of hand to illustrate the 'art' of innovation and how to integrate creativity into organisations.

Conference Recommendation:

For those interested in creativity conferences, I would like to pass on a recommendation I was given by many participants of the Creativity Jamboree, which is the annual '**CREA Conference**' that is held in Italy (www.creaconference.com) and was said to be an experience worth making.

To close, I would like to pass on my congratulations and great thanks to the conference organisation and the many people contributing with their knowledge and experiences to a wonderful event!

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Mainz, 14th of August 2008

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