

TRENDING:

TECH AWARDS

SCHOOL REPORTS 2020

CAMPAIGN PODCAST

CORONAVIRUS



A view from Paul Stanway

Notes from the back of the creativity class

The more we understand about what enables creativity, the better we will be able to produce great work. Making it some sort of mercurial muse over which we have no control doesn't help any of us.



Paul Stanway

November 30, 2017

How long?

3-4 minutes

Mid-life crisis, imposter syndrome, future-proofing. Take your pick. They've all played their part in getting me to the point where I find myself in a position of reviewing the first term of the masters course in innovation, creativity and leadership at Cass Business School. The last time I found myself in a classroom was, literally, in the last century and I was handing in hand-written assignments. But here I am, approaching the end of my first term and ready to share some of the things I've learned so far.

"A problem well stated is a problem half solved"

This quote from pioneering American philosopher and educational reformer **John Dewey** sums up the heart of the work we've been doing in the creative problem-solving module. Clients come to agencies for answers, and they want them quickly. Taking time to unpack the stated problem is crucial because, all too often, that's not the root cause of the issue we're being asked to solve. It's so easy to forget this in the high-tempo melée of everyday operation.



ONE EVENT
THREE STREAMS
FIVE DAYS

It's not whether you're creative, but how

I can't stress this enough. The argument around whether somebody is or is not creative is as redundant as whether something is or is not art. Show me a detailed strategy plan, or a tricky production schedule with dozens of suppliers and stakeholders, and I'll show you an elegantly creative solution just below the surface. See also just about any problem-solving process ever devised. Creativity is a process not an output.

Creativity is not magic

Sorry to let the cat out of the bag, fellow creatives, but it's true. There's even a formula for it, scientifically supported – check out Ruth Noller's work for more on this. The more we understand about the circumstances and methodologies that enable creativity, the better we'll be able to produce great work. Making it some sort of mercurial muse over which we have no control doesn't help any of us.

You learn as much about yourself as you do about the subject

There's an age gap of more than 30 years between the oldest and youngest students on my course. Five different languages are spoken and 10 nationalities represented. You would not believe how similar we all are when it comes to our mindsets, personal experiences and hopes for the future. Looking for the affirmative in people, problems and situations will yield far more positive results than focusing on divisions and differences.

Be like water

Bruce Lee was right. It's refreshing to be in a situation where you don't have to know all the answers. Be flexible and fluid in your thinking, and try shifting perspective in the face of new information. Aside from feeling a weird kind of good (maybe that's just me), it's key to remaining fresh, relevant and open-minded in a VUCA* world.

*Look it up – you'll be using it in meetings before you know it.

It's not about the facts

The biggest learning has come from understanding (or at least beginning to understand) that information gets old in a hurry but critical thinking lasts a lifetime. The value of what I'm learning isn't the facts and the names, but the approach and the processes. Life-changing stuff.

Time poor yet mentally wealthy

I'm not going to pretend this is easy – I'm tired and my brain is running hot all the time. But I'm more creatively engaged and inspired than I've been for a long time. Thanks to the past 10 weeks, I have more tools and more confidence in my ability to use them. And, as a result, the quality of my work is getting better, which is the bottom line in all of this.

Organise. Everything

There'll be no *Stranger Things* marathons for me until at least 2019 but, on the positive side, my daily commute is now a far more productive part of my life than ever before and I find myself looking forward to the train journey into and out of London. Now I push myself to use time in the office more effectively than ever because I need to use my travel time to study. It has also made me focus more on my time at home with my family. When I have the time to spend with them, I'm more present and focused on enjoying it because I know there's not as much of it as I'd like.

The forthcoming Christmas break will replace my social calendar with research and assignment writing for deadlines over the festive period. But don't waste your sympathy on me, I (sort of) knew what I was getting into and, for every moment of terror, there have been so many more when I've felt my mind expanding. Or maybe that's just the lack of sleep. Whatever the cause, the price is more than worth it and feel nothing but excitement for the forthcoming year-and-a-half left of my course.

Paul Stanway is the co-founder and creative director of XYZ, an independent brand experience agency, and a part-time student on the Msc course in innovation, creativity and leadership at Cass Business School.

Topics

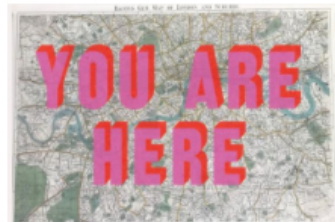
MARKETING EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING



RELATED ARTICLES



Does technology get in the way of creativity? Five things to think about



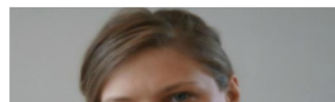
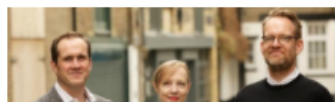
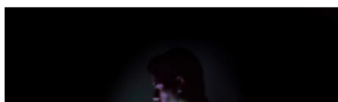
Migration is important for creativity



Why fear drives creativity



Populism and creativity





Why your iPhone is killing your creativity



XYZ founders launch new agency



XYZ strengthens senior team



Exclusive: XYZ reveals 2015 performance and plans for the year ahead



BECOME A CAMPAIGN MEMBER >

VIEW MY ACCOUNT >

VIEW MY BULLETINS >

JOIN, SHARE, LIKE, FOLLOW US ON:



Help and Information

About us

Contact us

Membership information

Register

Renew Membership

Email sign up

Advertise

FAQs

Accessibility

Editorial complaints

International

Campaign US

Campaign Asia Pacific

Campaign India

Campaign Middle East

Campaign Turkey

PRWeek US

PRWeek Asia

Medical Marketing & Media

Site Hubs

Media

Brands

Agencies

Campaign Insight

Campaign Jobs



© Haymarket Media Group Ltd. | Terms & Conditions | Cookie Notice | Privacy Notice

