Innovation leadership: 
Best practices from theatre creators

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Introduction

Creation and innovation unfold in specific cultures. Leadership shapes these cultures. Relying on more than twenty-five years of innovation practice in the manufacturing, service and theatre sectors, the author presents five leadership characteristics of theatrical creation and recommends their broader application.

This article tells you:
- how theatre leaders innovate,
- what kind of techniques they use and
- what other business sectors can adopt.

Innovation

Innovation is the successful delivery of a new play, product, process or service. It is the combination of knowledge, materials and forces in original, relevant, valued new plays, products, processes or services. Picasso put existing paints on existing canvas with existing skills. The tools and paints of a painter are objects; the tools and paints of a theatre director are people.

Innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within a context. Individual or collective creativity is a starting point for innovation; it is necessary but not sufficient. The creative insight must be put into action to make a genuine difference, to introduce a modified business process or to provide an improved product. Creativity may be displayed by individuals, but innovation – the production of the creation – occurs only in an organised environment. Innovation, like many functions, is an organisational process that requires specific tools, methods and leadership.

The innovation leadership of theatre creators is characterised by five best practices:
- a dynamic blend of leadership, management and coaching,
- the leverage of dual leadership,
- the convergence of leadership and collective creation,
- a context of systemic leadership,
- the extensive use of lateral thinking.

Let us define the concepts, observe how they are applied in theatre and sketch some recommendations for other business sectors. The theatrical leaders interviewed for this work include men and women, stage directors and play producers, young and established professionals from Australia, Cyprus, England, France, Greece and the United States.
Leadership, management and coaching

Concepts
The leader has a theatrical vision, conveys it to the members of the company, and motivates them to contribute to the success of the play. House and Podsakoff [1] defined ten leadership characteristics. They all apply to theatrical creators:

- Vision – Leaders articulate a theatrical vision congruent with the values of the company members.
- Passion and self-sacrifice – Leaders display a passion for, and have a strong conviction of, what they regard as the artistic correctness of their vision. They make self-sacrifices in the interest of their vision and play.
- Confidence, determination, and persistence – Leaders display a high degree of faith in themselves and in the attainment of their vision. They need it because this vision usually challenges the status quo.
- Image-building – Leaders are self-conscious about their image. They recognize the desirability of actors, designers and technicians perceiving them as competent, credible, and trustworthy.
- Role-modelling – Leaders’ image-building sets the stage for effective role-modelling because company members identify with the values of role models whom they perceived in positive terms.
- External representation – Leaders act as spokespersons for their companies and represent them to external constituencies.
- Expectations of and confidence in followers – Leaders communicate expectations of high performance from their followers and strong confidence in their followers’ ability to meet such expectations.
- Selective motive-arousal – Leaders selectively arouse those motives of followers that they see as of special relevance to the success of the play.
- Frame alignment – To persuade the company to embrace innovation, leaders engage in frame alignment. They assure the congruence of the company’s interests, values, and beliefs, with their activities, goals, and artistic vision.
- Inspirational communication – Leaders often communicate their vision in an inspirational manner using vivid stories, slogans, symbols, and ceremonies.

The manager gets things done through people. The manager plans, deciding what has to happen in the future; organises, making optimum use of the resources required to enable the plan to be realised successfully; and monitors, checking the progress against the plan which may need to be modified.

The coach supports company members (actors, designers, technicians…) to achieve their goals, with goal setting, encouragement, provocation and non-directive questions. The coach rarely offers advice or direction. Instead, the coach helps individuals to find their own solutions, by asking questions that reveal their situations. The coach holds the individuals accountable, so if individuals agree to a plan to achieve a goal, the coach will motivate them to complete the plan.
Theatrical experiences

Interviewer: Which is your own creativity mix of leadership, management and coaching? Why is it particularly effective and efficient?

Mikis: I am more a coach, which I find more effective. I have a tendency to teach, to articulate problems and to help others to solve them. I am not so much a leader, but more a happy-go-lucky person who tries what comes up and does not push a specific artistic vision. When things start rolling, then I give more importance to management. Leadership is more important when things need to be done with colleagues, than when things need to be done with direct reports.

Juliette: I enthuse and galvanize people by my passion. My attitude in directing is more a coaching one, helping the actors to find what they need.

Peter: I am a leader and a manager and a coach. I delegate, I am aware of what is going on but I do not need to do it myself.

Melina: All roles will be taken. The artistic mind/spark will go through the arc of leadership, management and coaching in one unity. I feel that the coach knows better and teaches and I don’t think that a stage director should be a teacher.

Angela: I am more a leader and a manager and I avoid coaching. Everyone should be excited about the same idea and share the same language. Leadership is my process, shared with others. Management is out of the process, I do it. I lead the company and manage on the side. Coaching is individual, I avoid it. I try to get rid of the potential problems before rehearsal and thus to avoid the need for coaching.

Deborah: I am a leader in the sense that I own the vision. I lead from my personal – educated – point of view. My knowledge – based on education, experience and research – does not prevent them to feel that they have found it. I also ask them to do research. In theatre, you lead by knowledge. You need to be able to answer their questions. I have the impression that in business, they lead only by information. I find essential to choose the people you will work with. The mix leadership/management/coaching depends on to whom you are speaking. I am more a coach when I speak to actors. I am more a manager when I speak to a producer or to theatre staff, because that is what they need and expect – I need to change hat. The three facets of the mix are needed, I lead all the time – as I have the idea, the creative vision – but I appear sometimes as a coach and sometimes as a manager. The mix depends also on where you are. It is a cultural thing.

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Cameron: At the beginning you need a strong vision of the end product. You aim for an artistic success plus a commercial success plus a happy company. Having the right ingredients is crucial for the success. If the project/vision is worthwhile, it will be appreciated by the company and they will make it happen. It is important to be flexible, to have an open mind, keeping the artistic aim and getting the show on. The practical takes over; and everything has to be done for the good of the work; most of the performing arts professionals have that dedication: to create a piece of art.

Trevor: The theatre director is multitasking by essence. The three roles merge, they are not separated. The leader’s vision will only be realized by management and coaching.

Recommendations
All theatre creators recognize leadership as the key role they take during the innovation process; 5 out of 8 in a mix with both management and coaching; 2 in a mix with management and 1 in a mix with coaching.

Talent or skills? A talent is a special aptitude, a faculty miraculously bestowed, a gift, a virtue looked upon as emanation from heaven, a natural endowment. Yet, skills are abilities, usually learned and acquired through training, to perform actions which achieve desired outcome. Many accept that if leadership is a talent, management and coaching are skills. Accenture [2] states that non-profit organisations [incl. theatres] would benefit from adopting some of the for-profit world’s basic business practices related to operational efficiency. This is certainly pertinent: theatre can learn from business management… and, according to our experience, business can learn from theatre leadership. But as the business sectors cannot train leaders, the challenge is how to identify, attract and retain them.

The theatre creators show a very flexible approach to leadership:
- blended with management and coaching,
- adapted to the innovation phase, more at the beginning, less at the end,
- adapted to the relationship, more between colleagues, i.e. between directors and producers, and less with actors,
- adapted to the cultural environment, more in Anglo-Saxon countries and less in Mediterranean ones.

Innovation leadership is complex: blended with other modi operandi, dynamic, situational and cultural. One size does not fit all. The business sectors cannot create and nurture, i.e. manage, one innovation leadership, one innovation culture. They must be able to surf on the waves of a complex innovation eco-system. Predictable leadership, modelling and forecasting the key innovation behaviour, reaches very quickly the limit of its effectiveness. The same humility seems to be appropriate in front of the weather, the stock exchange and the innovation… another challenge indeed.

The following paragraphs will bring clues about how to address the two challenges which have just been identified here.
Dual leadership

Concepts
Gronn [3] pinpointed in 1999 the neglected role of the leadership couple, recognizing that the singular leadership – one person leading followers – was an oversimplification. He continues his research and just published an article [4] about the significance of distributed leadership, distinguishing two patterns:

- an aggregated pattern, where number of individuals, on different occasions, as part of different activities, for varying periods of time and for a variety of reasons, are believed by their colleagues to exercise leadership;
- a holistic pattern, when the parts are combined to form a whole, the resulting new object comprises a functioning unit with its own unique structural integrity that acts back on the parts themselves. Holism finds practical expression in close working partnerships in the workplace between two or more people, where the understanding between them is such that they know instinctively how the other will respond.

In theatre, dual leadership is the norm. Plays are led by couples of stage directors and play producers; venues are led by couples of artistic and executive directors. Dual and distributed leadership in both the aggregated and holistic patterns are consciously practiced in theatre as reported in the following theatrical experiences related to dual and systemic leaderships.

Theatrical experiences
Interviewer: Which are your tips about the establishment and maintenance of a productive dual leadership, one leader focusing more on the artistic policy, the other more on the financial bottom-line?

Mikis: It requires an ability to concede, the experience to work with people instead of over people. One needs to be able to say yes, to listen, to be patient, to take on board other ideas, complementary ideas. The major advantage is the gained versatility; it is better than to only get reviews or comments.

Juliette: There is a blur between profession and friendship. It is based on trust and equal status – no one is above the other. Dual leadership is the only way I worked so far; I tried to lead alone but it did not work. Dual leadership is easier and more pleasant.

Peter: I am practicing dual leadership. I am the artistic/stage director dealing with one of my partner, the producer. I do not negotiate, he does. He administers and sticks to the budget, but has nothing to do with the rehearsal. I fight for the art, he protects the budget. The key success factors are: 1) the ability to compromise, 2) clearly defined roles and 3) an agreement on the company’s objectives. This leadership approach fits better most of theatre creators. The single leadership – where one assures the unified vision – is only for very few geniuses.

Melina: Clear communication and role definitions are the key success factors. The director focuses on the staging, the producer brings the audience. Both share what the production should be/do in order to be aligned with the artistic policy.
Angela: Trust is essential. The work should be divided according to individual talents and strengths. Communication should be open and almost permanent. If there is a problem with interferences (e.g. a producer commenting on a staging), it can be solved by clear communication. People work together because they know each other in advance. They choose who they collaborate with. It is personal.

Deborah: A clear communication is imperative from the beginning to the end and all the time, e.g. a stage director and a producer have to be in communication about the choice of a choreographer. Imperative is also a clear understanding of the two different roles. The director stands for the creation, the producer stands for the finances. The director works inside, in the rehearsal room; the producer works outside, with the audience and all trades. But when theatre becomes a business, e.g. in the commercial world, the directors have a tendency to report to the producers – as the latter hire and fire.

Cameron: The director takes care of the artistic values, but ultimately it is the producer’s responsibility. Only few producers delegate the art completely to the director. Directors get accolades, but producers have the ultimate control because they control the finances. Directors get fired. A director has more to lose: he can lose his reputation. At worst a producer loses money and then does something else. A producer needs to have faith in the director he chooses and they have to find a common ground – the production – to work towards. In subsidised theatre, some stage directors may take risk to boast themselves; very often it is detrimental to the piece itself. Extreme risk should only be taken if producer and director fully agree.

Trevor: The dual leadership is tough. It is a question of personality and character… and of power, i.e. money has normally the final say. Who-needs-who most defines the real power: a producer may depend on a star director, a director may depend on a star actor… but star is linked to money, to the financial imperative. In theatre, it normally does not come to that: agreements are the normal way. If director and producer share their thinking early, they will always be able to solve their disagreements.

Recommendations
Many years before businesses started to consider the double bottom line (which enhances the fiscal bottom line by a second one measuring the performance in terms of social impact) and the triple bottom line (People, Planet, Profit, which captures an expanded spectrum of values and criteria – social, environmental and economic – for measuring organisational success), theatres measured their performances with two scales: art and finance. Therefore, they practice naturally the double leadership: artistic and financial. One cannot equate art and money. A theatre – commercial or non-profit – cannot let one prime over the other without heading for disaster. Creation can be purely artistic; innovation must be artistic and economically viable. The introduction of multiple bottom lines in other business sectors – at least in their research and development departments and divisions – seems to be recommendable.
Theatre creators enumerate the following conditions for a successful dual leadership:

- ability to listen, concede, compromise and agree,
- patience,
- trust,
- equal status,
- clearly defined roles based on talents and strengths,
- consensus on company’s objectives,
- clear, open and permanent communication.

In theatre, most leadership collaborations follow relationship and friendship. In other business sectors – except in start-ups – relationship and friendship may follow collaboration. In theatre – just like in start-ups – you choose with whom you will be working. Could established businesses mimic this practice, and ask people, who already know and appreciate each other, to lead together?

Leadership and collective creation

Concepts

In 2004 the University of Cologne organised a symposium about The Lives and Deaths of Collective Creation Theatre (1960-1985). Recognizing that collective creation had been a creation, a method, a way of operating, a subversive movement and an aesthetic revolution, it concluded – somewhat prematurely – that the movement had almost totally disappeared. It did not. It is still taught in drama schools and still influences the innovation process of numerous theatre companies.

The concept of collective creation refers to a creative venture made by group decisions. A collective is built upon the strength of the company as it makes the rehearsal journey. The process may vary from company to company according to the topic selected and the makeup of the company. The director listens carefully to the company members and allows the process to unfold accordingly. The key principles are:

- Group process – Everyone must agree to work together, contribute ideas, and remain flexible.
- Collaboration – Power and decision making are shared, everyone has a voice, respects one another.
- Rigorous thinking – Engage in a world of ideas and concepts; explore ideas through image, music and metaphor; involve creative and critical thinking.
- Trust – Building an atmosphere of trust and support is the most important task of the director.
- Aesthetics – An aesthetic experience occurs; need to think as artists; emphasis remains on the work, decisions make the play stronger and do not cater to individual egos.
- Process documentation – This is invaluable to reflection and evaluation.

Collective creation does not necessarily mean to work without initial text or without vision. Proceeding by observations, researches and improvisations, moving forward methodically through trials and errors, groups of well trained actors, well supervised by an external observer – established, when all is said and done, as director – produce memorable shows [5].
Theatrical experiences

Interviewer: How do you reconcile the apparently conflicting ideas of company's collective creation and director's or producer's leadership?

Mikis: In collective creation, the leader is the trusted and respected one, because he earned trust and respect through his knowledge. It is a give-and-take game: you give/delegate creativity and take responsibility. It is a cultural thing. English people expect a tighter leadership. In Greece, the actors control themselves, help others to direct themselves, and may tend to a diva style, operating a hostile take over of the leadership function.

Juliette: I change role from director to actor. As an actor, I listen and experiment. As a director, I give purpose and direction. The director acts in a way.

Peter: Our company is run as a collective of 4 people: an artistic/stage director, an actor, an administrator/negotiator and an advisor. This system is very adequate for people who have more than one professional occupation. It is a team. We have disagreements but we solve them. There is one artistic direction, but every one reads up to 20 plays a year and everyone has a veto right on the production. Similarly, there is one administrative direction, but everyone is informed and everyone has a veto right on the major decisions. A good stage director leads one idea; every actor and every designer is involved and has the right to contribute.

Melina: The leader is the person in front, the one who guides. The director is the person behind, the one who stimulates the group and creates the atmosphere. The director does not pull, she supports. The director picks the strong points of the group, she selects the positive, and she creates out of the elements brought forward by the group.

Angela: In collective creation, the actors and designers need freedom, they must be free to be bold, free to explore – up to the point that everyone thinks that she/he is the leader. The more you lead, the more you suffocate the process.

Deborah: The director/leader creates the environment – the rehearsal room where the actors play – where creativity happens. She communicates the vision; the actors answer the director’s vision, they create as she wishes. They are much better actors that the director is. In a collective creation, everyone, director, actors, designers, leverage his/her expertise. The relation between direction and collective creation is fundamental. The director must not be dogmatic, forceful, patronising or pushing. Know who you work with, never be patronising, leverage all different talents, using their owners’ vocabulary and be aware of the working relationships.
Cameron: Frictions will always occur between various people in artistic enterprises; they need to be sorted out. Producer and director act more as puppeteers when it comes to collective creation. But it always depends on the work itself: the artistic say is broader for a new piece. If risks and gambles are absolutely shared and agreed upon, go for them, otherwise don’t.

Trevor: Collective creation is a wrong definition. Every work of theatre is collective by definition and there is a hierarchy led by the director. The tools and paints of a painter are objects, the tools and paints of a theatre director are people. It is collective and clearly directed.

Recommendations
Theatre companies are engaged in conveying meaning to their audience and in finding meaning for themselves through personal exploration. Through collective creation they acknowledge the importance of both aspects, and bring them together in one artistic experience. For theatre practitioners, collective creation is innovation, individual creation is only creativity.

The key success behaviours of theatre leaders engaged in collective creation are:
- they lead and guide,
- they build and maintain a platform of freedom, a space where one proceeds obviously by trials and errors,
- they do not micro-manage,
- they give up their own creativity to focus on creation guidance and support,
- they take responsibility.

Of course, dear reader, this rings a bell. You have read this several times in the innovation management literature. But success does not come from reading but from doing. Trust yourself that you can let go and at the same time keep the responsibility. This is the mark of a true leader. You cannot study or train this... you can only do it.

Systemic leadership

Concepts
As Collier and Esteban [6] summarize it, systemic leadership develops a view of leadership appropriate to post-industrial organisations in situations of rapid change. These organisations are described as systems needing continual renewal if they are to survive, and chaotic in that they must find direction in the context of pressures for change. Leadership is the systemic capacity, diffused and nurtured throughout the organisation, of finding direction, of fostering the processes which ensure renewal, and of managing the systemic and human paradoxes endemic in these organisations. Systemic leadership is ethical in that it creates community, encourages autonomy and creativity and intends the good in its purposes and practices, and effective in that it fosters emergence and organisational renewal.
Most theatre creators rely on systemic leadership. Systemic leadership is the task of every member of the company. It is a relational and hence political and dynamic process based on mutual influencing, bargaining, coalition building. The generative quality of systemic leadership, as it grows creativity and fosters organisational learning, changes the basis of relationship between the company and its members from one of contract to one of community, to a social configuration in which the theatrical enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and the participation is recognizable as competence.

Theatrical experiences

Interviewer: Do you rely on systemic leadership? How does it affect your leadership? Why is it particularly effective and efficient?

Mikis: I practice both systemic and linear/structural leadership. It depends on the people. With self-starters, I am in a dual leadership/collaboration context and lead by systemic leadership. With people who do not see it, I need to lead structurally. I use both leadership approaches even in the same rehearsal session, it depends on with whom. Systemic leadership depends on the leadership-management-coaching mix. If you are a coach you tend to lead by systemic leadership. If you are a leader, you tend to lead more by structured leadership.

Juliette: I use systemic leadership. I feel what happens. One person creates the spark to make it happen. I lead at the moment. It stems out of the process. Systemic leadership is the natural way. There is no plan, it happens.

Peter: We have four heads, there is no dictatorship. Problems will be brought to different people: the director, the actor, the administrator or the advisor. We practice systemic leadership by design and definition.

Melina: With systemic leadership things may take longer than with structural leadership. Theatre is a community creation; it cannot be as hierarchical as the army. Theatre needs a community, an objective and a separation of labour according to talents.

Angela: In my small theatre company in Chicago, leadership comes from the top. Leadership can be dynamic, it can change. We have an artistic director (the central figure), a board of directors and artistic associates. The power is shifting, but at the end of the day, the artistic director leads. The artistic director leads the company, the executive director reports to the board.

Deborah: I experienced structural leadership in an arts organisation. It did work through clearly structured departments, with a clear, structured, rigid leadership and communication. In my front-of-house department I introduced a more systemic, casual management. I opened the dialog, put everyone in the same room, abolish the process hierarchies, e.g. the phone cascading process. Before, the people were afraid to make a mistake. As soon as the phone cascading disappeared, a community structure appeared. Pay attention to email, they foster individuality and kill community.
Cameron: Everyone has a job to do, is allocated to a department to maximise his potential. If everyone is focusing on one common goal, it will automatically work. The creative process is more systemic and the production process is more structured, but the producer is involved in both. He gives inputs on what he wants to see at the end and has an opinion about everything. The challenge is to be always on the same page with the stage director.

Trevor: Theatre is a very complex form of art. One can see a theatre organisation as a system of units of people: stage managers, designers, actors. Each unit may have a different way to be led, some may be systemic, some may be structured; it depends on the type of work. Musical is more command-and-control by the nature of the material; it is very structured. Narrative play and novel adaptation are much more systemic, the result of dialogue and improvisation. I listen, talk and discuss. I will follow a good idea. I am instinctively systemic.

**Recommendations**

Professional theatre is one of the most complex human endeavours. The complexity of a theatre building is second only to the complexity of a nuclear power plan. But many more trades and legal entities contribute to the production of a play or an opera than to the production of electricity. *Theatre creators naturally grow up in complexity.*

Theatre, even commercial theatre, is essentially collaborative. Most of the other business sectors are essentially competitive. Competitive businesses adopted – logically – a competitive leadership structure, similar to the one developed by the armies of the Roman Empire more than two thousand years ago. Managers, sub-managers, sub-sub-managers and one-way communications, top-down for the instructions, bottom-up for the reports. In contrast, theatrical collaboration is characterized by dynamically distributed leadership and two-way communications. *Theatre creators collaborate, they do not compete.*

We came to systemic leadership through leadership blends, dual leadership and collective creation. And now the emergence: *in innovation, leadership is not the attribute of one or two leaders but one complex, dynamic, situational and cultural collaborative modus operandi of the innovative team.* One can say it is a spirit. In this case the successful innovation leader is the one who can instil, spread and maintain the shared spirit of leadership.

**Lateral thinking**

**Concepts**

Lateral thinking seeks to solve problems by unorthodox or apparently illogical methods. As de Bono [7] emphasises it, the key word is *apparently*. The methods may seem *illogical* in terms of normal logic but are derived from the logic of patterning systems where, for example, provocation is a necessity. With *vertical* thinking you take a position and then you seek to build on that basis. The next step depends on where you are; it has to be related and logically derived from where you are at this moment. With lateral thinking we move sideways to try different perceptions, different concepts, different points of entry. We can use various methods, including provocations, to get us out of the usual line of thought.
Lateral thinking is linked to perception. With lateral thinking we seek to put forward different views. All are correct and all can coexist. The different views are not derived each from the other but are independently produced. In this sense, lateral thinking has to do with exploration just as perception has to do with exploration. Lateral thinking is perceptual thinking as distinct from logical processing thinking (entrenched or predictable thinking). Lateral thinking is concerned with changing concepts and perceptions. It is based on the behaviour of self-organising systems.

**Theatrical experiences**

Interviewer: Do you practice lateral thinking? How does it affect your leadership? Why is it particularly effective and efficient?

Mikis: Lateral thinking is used all the time. It works if you do it fast: 1) you quickly throw the people off balance, they look at the issue fresh, it helps to get things burning; 2) when it is finished, e.g. when you tried/discussed it, you connect it back to make it relevant.

Juliette: I use it permanently. You shouldn’t be afraid to lose control.

Peter: Theatre inevitably requires lateral thinking. Thinking is the core of theatre. Things happen and we need to re-evaluate all the time and better come with out-of-the-box solutions.

Melina: What is at stake? You must put things on test, experience, check emotional impact, and create with passion. Theatre is not something we do to get something else back. We take more risks; we have the freedom to test ourselves, to push the envelope further. Business has a simple goal: to make money by satisfying needs. They replicate old successes; they know the needs they satisfy. Commercial theatre satisfies the demands from the audience. Non-profit theatre tries to understand something, tries to discover something new about itself, explores, discovers.

Angela: We think as much out of the box as possible. We want to innovate, to attract new audiences; anything must be possible. As a director, I accept to be surprised… but there are limits, e.g. the technical week or the budget. Let’s think big and bold. Theatre needs to share, i.e. needs to lose ownership, and needs an audience; things happen with the audience.

Deborah: Lateral thinking is more creative. The leader empowers and gives freedom. Fear must be banned from a creative environment. There is no right or wrong. The actors and designers do not have to justify their ideas. The rehearsal is an adventure, we do not know what the day will bring, it is like a chess game. The director filters out all the ideas and rejects what is inappropriate. Some fantastic ideas are rejected because they do not fit the artistic vision or because they do not fit the conscious or subconscious audience’s perception. E.g. you can replace nudity by something else that will shock with the same force. The theatre of the future is to revolutionize how the actors communicate with the audience.
Cameron: There is no plain sailing in theatre, any eventuality can occur. Lateral thinking is the only way to think. You cannot think logically, a leading to b and b leading to c. That is in the nature of the business. So many strands have to be reined in. It is not a mechanical process.

Trevor: I use – inherently – only lateral thinking to find the creative solution. Of course there is a linear progression but the solution of a problem which is not immediately solved linearly will request instinct, lateral thinking, unconnected abstractions, is-there-another-way-to-solve-it is the normal question; not-invented-here is banned. Lateral thinking is an irrational connection to a moment which will then be reconciled with linearity.

**Recommendations**

Not only it is not enough to lead, not only we cannot follow a unique leader anymore, not only we left the comfort zone of structural leadership, but now, we also have to abandon the cosiness of vertical and logical thinking.

Do not be mistaken, innovation leaders are not adept of laissez-faire. They do things. They are always alert, aware and active. *The key success factors of lateral thinking in theatre are:*

- ability to foster an atmosphere of freedom, freedom to be bold, freedom to think big, freedom from right and wrong, freedom from tradition, freedom from justification,
- ability to provoke, to throw people out of balance, to connect irrationally, coupled with the
- ability to link with the behavioural logic of patterning and self-organising systems, to connect back and exploit the relevance, to reconcile with linearity.

And these abilities are neither random nor sporadic. For example, to foster an atmosphere of freedom during rehearsal requires daily warm-up exercises. Physical warm-up of the bodies, to physically free all muscles to move and to speak; psychological warm-ups to free the minds and leave out of the rehearsal room all thoughts and worries external to the play; relational warm-ups to connect each member of the ensemble with each other and enable the collective creation. There are directing books full of these exercises; some of them are used by innovative Japanese businesses. Which ones will be effective for these or those theatre creators will come out of their own experience. Which ones will be efficient with this or that group of actors and designers is again a result of the leader’s experimentation. There is no free lunch.

**Conclusion**

Many business sectors would benefit from adopting some of the theatre world’s basic creation practices related to innovation leadership.

Recognizing the interdependence of leadership, management and coaching in the dynamic, situational and cultural innovation context, businesses should identify, attract and retain the leaders they cannot train and accept that a nurturing innovation culture depends on an ever evolving leadership.
Recognizing the necessity of multiple bottom-lines, at least in their innovation centres, businesses should embrace the challenges of dual leadership, meet the conditions of its success.

Recognizing that although creativity can be individual, innovation is collective, businesses should lead collective creations and accept the discipline required by the group process.

Recognizing the complex and collaborative nature of innovation, businesses should reject the ineffective simplification of structural leadership and foster leaders who can instil, spread and maintain a shared spirit of leadership.

Recognizing the inherent conservatism of vertical or logical thinking, businesses should build and maintain platforms of freedom, where their teams can truly think out of the box, and have their ideas reconnected to the relevant purpose of the company.

The balanced reliance on these five best theatrical practices would lead businesses to develop effective innovation leadership and market relevant innovations.

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