

# Tomorrow's People:

Making Cultures for Creativity



Edited by Zoë Clapp

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## Making Cultures for Creativity

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A collection of eight essays about how the power of imagination gives businesses their commercial edge.

From the uneasy relationship between 'the creatives' and 'the business' to the art of collaboration, eight prominent industry figures reveal how they keep imagination alive in their businesses – and why pushing creative boundaries is so important for organisations, now and in the future.

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With an introduction from Darren Childs  
and essays from:

Sharon Horgan / Merman

Matt Brittin / Google

Chris Chibnall

Henry Mason / Trendwatching

Piv Bernth / DR

John Kampfner / Creative Industries Federation

Dougal Wilson

Tim Hincks / Endemol Shine Group



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# Foreword

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Darren Childs

Darren Childs, CEO of UKTV, has had a prestigious international career in broadcast media spanning two decades. Darren joined UKTV – a joint venture between BBC Worldwide and Scripps Networks Interactive, Inc. – in September 2010. Darren previously held senior executive roles at BBC Worldwide, Sony Pictures Television, HBO Europe and News Corp’s Star TV.

UKTV doesn't make physical products, it makes ideas. So my job as the leader of this organisation is to make sure that we have the right people to produce great ideas, that their working days are structured around them having great ideas, and that their colleagues and environment are supportive of great ideas. If all that happens, then success tends to follow.

Consequently, my belief is that the threat of digitisation is nothing but a smokescreen for poor performance, because we all know that the TV industry itself is already digital. The real challenge, in an already-digital world, is not to repel new on-demand competitors. The real challenge is to attract the most ingenious talent into our own businesses – and to nurture and support and develop those bright people, so that we can build our own highly creative – and profitable – futures.

Pretty much every industry on earth is being challenged and disrupted, so these essays are here to stimulate thinking about new and better ways to lead creative organisations through this period of dynamic change.

At UKTV, we're trying to grasp that challenge with both hands. We believe in casting our creative net widely: our transparent and balanced recruitment process has led, without targets or quotas, to BAME representation in our teams that is three times the industry average. (And my hunch is that Dynamo was such a success on UKTV because he spoke to Britain's young people the way they speak to each other – not the way that 40-something TV executives inside the M25 would speak).

As our people rise up through their careers, we try to give them the support and training that they need to be leading lights in the industry; teaching them to inspire, lead, support, nurture and constructively negotiate, so that best practice becomes a successive, self-perpetuating cycle.

*The real challenge, in an already digital world, is not to repel new on-demand competitors. The real challenge is to attract the most ingenious talent into our own businesses.*

Look around the world: every great company has a great culture. We never hold ourselves up as anywhere near perfect, but we do spend a lot of time and energy trying to create a culture that rewards people for risk-taking, for innovation and, yes, for wise decisions that have our viewers' needs in mind.

People seem to enjoy coming to our inventively-designed office and that too is important, because environment has an enormous impact on the ideas we create. Unlike the famous "Dave" room at our old offices, our new meeting rooms have an intentionally minimalist design. We don't want ideas for the future of our brands to be stifled by the ideas that shaped their past.

So we've entitled this book *Tomorrow's People*. I want to learn from best practice wherever it springs up: in the technology sector, among stellar creative talent and overseas. So we've asked Matt Brittin from Google, comedienne Sharon Horgan and DR's Piv Bernth – who produced Danish hit *The Killing* – to offer their thoughts.

The result is a collection of essays that is as encouraging and enlightening as it is disruptive. From Tim Hincks, you'll learn the one thing not to say in a development meeting – then, from Broadchurch creator Chris Chibnall, you'll find out why drama writers need to hit the treadmill. And in Copenhagen, it seems, creativity thrives when there are rats under the floorboards.

My hope is that this book will fuel a new debate – about diversity, about creativity, about the nature of success – across the TV industry. Our creative future depends on it.

# The Importance of a Lucky Break

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Sharon Horgan



Sharon Horgan is one of British comedy's most successful writer-performers. She stars in hit show Catastrophe and, through her production company Merman, is showrunning Sarah Jessica Parker's upcoming HBO series, Divorce.

In the TV industry, everyone remembers when they got their big break. But for me, unlike most people, it involved an actual fracture.

It was 2001, and I was trying to become a comedy writer in London. I was sending out scripts on spec and entering competitions. With my writing partner, Dennis Kelly, I sent a script in to the BBC New Comedy Award – two sketches, in fact. They both had, well, sexual content. Nothing’s really changed there.

I was a long way from paying the bills with my comedy, so I worked as a waitress at Mildred’s vegetarian restaurant in Soho. Then one night, I came off my bike and hurt my arm. When I turned up for work the next day, I realised that my arm was just kind of swinging by my side.

So I went to A&E at St Thomas’ Hospital and, sure enough, I’d broken my elbow. I was so upset, but in fact that was the beginning of my career: I had to give up my job at Mildred’s and find a way to make money that didn’t involve carrying plates.

Then Dennis and I were told that our script had won the BBC New Comedy Award. So I ended up at the Edinburgh Festival with my arm in a sling, and I had to live off my credit card for a while, but I had to make my comedy career happen. Rob Delaney, my co-writer and co-star in our Channel 4 series *Catastrophe*, went through a similar sort of thing. He used to have a big corporate job. He had a Rolex and money in the bank. One day, he terrified his poor wife by telling her that he was leaving his job to be a comedian. For years, he didn’t make a bean.

So my advice to anyone starting out in comedy: break your elbow and leave your job. Next; find someone experienced to help you develop. I was very lucky to meet Harry Thompson, who created *Never Mind the Buzzcocks* and *Monkey Dust*. He just really liked Kelly’s and my voice. You can get disillusioned very quickly, because the stuff you send out at first isn’t going to be very good – it’s

*My advice, to anyone starting out in comedy: break your elbow and leave your job.*

just not – but if someone sees a spark of something, they might care enough to spend time helping you get better.

You'll also need to grow a really tough skin, because a lot of the time it just doesn't happen. When you get your work sent back to you with a polite "no", it's up to you to keep going. And be prepared to throw stuff away. People get married to their big idea, people get married to their first script. They're told that it's good, and maybe it is, but maybe it's not good enough. Or maybe it's not the thing people want at that time. Sometimes, you have to be prepared to completely start over.

Every series I've ever done has had at least one episode that has had to be binned, and it's frightening. You're in production, there is a ticking clock, but still you have to let a script go. You have to stop trying to make a silk purse out of something which is just all sow-y. And which is always going to be sow-y.

I started writing the second series of *Catastrophe*, by the way, while Rob was on paternity leave earlier this year. A lot of what I wrote in those first few weeks might not make it into the final scripts – maybe as much as 50 per cent of it. But I just kept ploughing through it. The good news is, I could tell from Rob's emails that paternity leave was tough – so at least he'd have plenty of new material when he got back.

Even when you've finally made something that was considered good or did well – like my BBC Three series *Pulling* in 2006 – it really doesn't matter when you come to pitch your next project. You do have a bit of an advantage, because "new" is "interesting" and people think, "We want to see what's next." So you might get in the door quicker – but everything that you write isn't necessarily going to get greenlit, which is kind of terrifying.

To be honest, I didn't feel like I'd stopped being "new talent" until about a year ago, when I started my own production company – Merman – with the producer Clelia Mountford. I've got two series in production – *Catastrophe* in the UK and *Divorce*, starring Sarah Jessica Parker, for HBO in America. So I suddenly have to be an adult, whether I like it or not.

Divorce is my first series for HBO, so in a way everything is new again. I had developed another series for HBO, which didn't get made. But then they were looking for a project for Sarah Jessica Parker and they showed her those scripts. She asked to meet me – and she turned out to be a great lady. She's beautiful, she's tiny, she's a real thinker and serious about what she does. But also smart and funny – like, irreverent if you get a cocktail down her. She's fun.

I started thinking about her, and what I'd like to see her do – the kind of thing I want to see her doing post Sex and the City, and the kind of person she is now. I don't know why, but I just liked the idea of a very, very long-term, hardcore divorce. I'd been watching The War of the Roses, which is such a great movie, funny and dark. I talked to Sarah about it, and she liked it, and HBO let us take Divorce from idea; to script; to pilot; to series very quickly.

*The trick with my first American series is to make it with a bunch of people who've done American shows a million times before.*

A bit like my early collaborations with Harry Thompson, the trick for me with my first American series is to make it with a bunch of people who've done American shows a million times before. We've got the writer Paul Simms and the director Jesse Peretz, both of whom recently worked on Girls, and are very experienced. We have a writers' room of eight writers, so it's really great because you get all those brains thinking. And we've got this incredible divorce lawyer who's consulting on the show and who's done some of the most horrific celebrity divorces. Ours is more of an emotional divorce, but money always comes into it. What I've realised is that people would rather pay a large amount of money to lawyers, than pay a much smaller amount to their ex.

My company Merman is a co-producer on Divorce, and my business partner Clelia is now making the third season of The Increasingly Poor Decisions of Todd Margaret, which she brought to the company as a start-up production. As a company, we're finding out what our thing is, what our voice is. Clelia will find a book that she thinks could be adapted, and then it's a question of putting the right people together and finding the right talent, as she did on A

Young Doctor's Notebook when she was at Big Talk. Then there's me, writing and creating my own shows – so hopefully we have two interesting ways to attract writers and creators. Because I love reading scripts from new writers, it's like a "busman's holiday" kind of thing for me. And it's lovely not to have to start with a blank sheet of paper.

When I read a script, I'm looking for something that has a nuance to it that I haven't seen before. There are so many formulaic scripts written from the same template. The big thing for me is when someone has a voice: it can be just a turn of phrase, it can be in the way someone puts a sentence together, or it can be in the storyline or the concept. That's exciting, because it feels new and fresh and it makes you want to develop something further.

I do think absolutely that the way forward for new talent, in the age of YouTube and Vimeo, is to make your own content. Of course, many online creators are sophisticated enough to sell their own stuff: I loved a Vimeo series of shorts called High Maintenance, and wanted to work with its creators Katja Blichfeld and Ben Sinclair – only to find out that HBO had bought the whole thing.

But there's still an incredible value for new talent in working with production companies like Merman – people who have made shows before, helping you bring your idea to life. So at the moment, Merman are in development on a number of shows, as well as being in production on others. We're a tiny bunch at the moment – but we'll get bigger!

And if I could give a few words of advice to my younger self? I'd say: "Don't expect someone to tap you on the shoulder, and then hand you what you're looking for on a plate." The big handicap for me was that I was a dreamer. I thought that once I got to London, someone would just discover me. So I didn't start grafting until I was in my late 20s, even early 30s. I do think that young people should mess around and have some fun and gain their life story – I needed to find those stories – and as it worked out, it was fine. But it might not have been.

I also didn't have the level of confidence that I needed to push myself forward – I was from a tiny little village in Ireland. Dame Judi Dench and Julie Walters have both worried publicly about how difficult it is for working-class kids to get into acting these days, and I would hate to think that all the drama schools are full of posh kids who've been given a leg-up, or are related to someone famous – that's horribly upsetting.

The arts aren't funded properly by the government at the moment, at neither national nor local level, which in turn means there aren't as many theatres and arts groups for kids from modest backgrounds to get involved with. So part of the solution is for there to be more arts funding from the government. I also had a good support network around me. I had parents who helped me, but not every kid has that, which is why you need somewhere within your community where you can be encouraged.

*There aren't as many theatres and arts groups for kids from modest backgrounds to get involved with.*

Even then, there's no getting away from that advice to work hard. As someone who grew up on a turkey farm, I didn't go to drama school. To get into this industry, I simply had to graft as hard as I could. Oh, and I had to break my elbow.



# Still Hungry for Innovation

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Matt Brittin



**M**att Brittin is President, EMEA Business & Operations for Google, based in London. He previously worked at McKinsey & Company and Trinity Mirror, and rowed for Team GB at the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

**A**t Google, we give our staff free food. We're famous for it. It perplexes people from outside, who ask if a completely free cafeteria can really be cost-effective. Well, there are two answers to that. First, our employees say that they value the cafeteria more than it costs us to provide it – far more. Secondly, though, look at the way in which our free cafeteria is laid out. We provide long tables, with benches, so that staffers sit and eat next to random colleagues. That leads to unpredictable conversations, and unpredictable conversations lead to unpredictable ideas. So the cafeteria is one small way of keeping the spirit of creativity alive at Google.

Our offices – which are equally renowned, in the outside world, for their funky design – have similar goals in mind. Yes, we have lots of different areas where people can break out, and that's intended to be fun and stimulating. But the actual desks are all rammed together – again, so that people work collaboratively. One of the challenges for a company like Google is to continue to have the soul of a start-up, even at the scale we've now reached. Collaborating together, as well as having a clear view of what it is we're trying to achieve, is the way in which we'll continue to innovate.

It helps that we have a really inspiring mission: to organise the world's information for everyone, using technology to make literally billions of people's lives a little bit better every day. Though there's still a danger, as you get bigger, that you try and integrate everything – that you try to make all the parts of the organisation connect together. The problem is, that can actually slow you down.

So we make sure that we innovate all across the world – here in the UK, over half of our 2,000 or so staff are engineers. We also set up Google X, an experimental facility near our HQ in California, which is dedicated entirely

*One of the challenges for a company like Google is to continue to have the soul of a start-up, even at the scale we've now reached.*

to “moonshots”: ambitious, speculative research projects, from which we may never make a profit – but which all have the ambition of making a huge leap forward.

Look at it this way: if you try and make something 10 per cent better, you’re likely to take an incremental approach – start from what you’ve got, and refine it. If you try and make something 10 times better, though, you’ve got to start from scratch. To compete in the age of the internet, that’s what you need to do, because the rate of change in the digital world is faster than it’s ever been. So to innovate first, and only then think about how you can monetise your invention, is the right sequence of things.

For example: a Google X team is now well-advanced with the development of a driverless car. That could help prevent the nearly 1.3million road deaths each year that are caused by human error, which is a very worthy aim in itself. But that’s not the end of the story. Think about what a driverless car needs to do: it needs to absorb a very large amount of data in real time, process it, and make decisions about speed and direction to keep driving safely. This research can help us in fields that require similar kinds of computing power, such as very rapid voice translation. Which is much closer to our existing business – but wasn’t where we aimed our moonshot at all.

In the technology sector, our approach to innovation can also be quite different from the approach that other sectors take. If a pharmaceutical company is developing a new drug, that drug must – for obvious reasons – be evaluated and tested in a rigorously controlled framework. Whereas for digital products, “testing” is often the same thing as “using”. When we launched Gmail, years ago now, we put it out in beta. The early version wasn’t always going to work perfectly, but the more feedback we got, the better the product became. That’s a very different development philosophy, and it’s one of the reasons why digital technology is so disruptive to existing industries.

In the TV industry, for example, programmes traditionally spend ages in pre-production, before they are shot, edited and broadcast. Now, though, YouTube

can be used as a tool to short-circuit some of that and to take a different creative path. One example of that possibility came from no less bright a TV luminary than this year's MacTaggart lecturer, at the Guardian Edinburgh International TV Festival, Armando Iannucci. When he and Steve Coogan revived the character Alan Partridge, they did it on YouTube. That series of YouTube shorts then turned into a show for Sky Atlantic, and eventually into the Alpha Papa feature film.

Jamie Oliver, a star of traditional TV, now also connects with his audience in a different way – on his Food Tube channel on YouTube. RTL, Europe's biggest broadcaster, has a presence on YouTube through their continental TV channels, through their Fremantle production division, and through buying existing YouTube networks. So what started as "dogs on skateboards" has become a powerful platform for expression and creativity.

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The YouTube opportunity combines art and science. For content creators who already understand the art of video and storytelling, there's an amazing toolkit on YouTube that allows them to connect with audiences in new ways – to experiment, to learn, and to get feedback in a way that was impossible in the traditional cycle of TV production. YouTube analytics show not only how many people are watching your video, but where in the world they are. You can see the precise points in your video where people pause and rewind – and, less happily, the points where they end their viewing. You get user feedback, from comments and sharing. And other YouTubers also, of course, post their own videos in response to professionally-made content. A Doctor Who fan called Billy Henshaw created and uploaded his own version of the famous opening title sequence – which the BBC producers liked so much, they used it as the basis for the new titles of the actual TV show when Peter Capaldi took over as the Doctor.

We're not yet at the stage where YouTube videos can generate the kind of revenue that would fund the production of something as expensive as, say, Downton Abbey. But I wouldn't say "never". Bear in mind that YouTube is entirely ad-funded at the moment, and we're in the early stages of monetisation. We have innovative skippable ads, for which the advertiser only pays if the user chooses to keep watching. YouTube also doesn't yet have a widespread subscription model – other than a beta project in music. In order to get to the point where YouTube could monetise content in the same way as TV, those two things would need to really take off. And revenue for an individual video also depends, of course, on the size of the audience you can attract.

At the same time, the importance of the linear TV schedule is clearly declining – as, to an extent, is the importance of traditional TV channels. Many viewers – especially younger ones – wonder why they should wait a week to watch the next episode of their favourite show. That's why Netflix has had such great success releasing whole seasons of its dramas, including House of Cards, on the same day. Meanwhile, devices such as Google Chromecast – which allows you to watch part of a show on your phone on the train, and then seamlessly watch the rest on your TV when you get home – are bringing all the different video screens closer to true convergence.

In a world where the choice of video has exploded, content brands are of course still very important – if a show is brought to you by the BBC, or HBO, or Netflix, then that's an endorsement of quality. But there is definitely a challenge for traditional TV companies in this demographic and technological shift.

There are many challenges, too, for a digitally-native business such as Google. Anyone who reads the business pages will know about the issues we have faced in Britain, in Europe and elsewhere. As head of Google in Europe, one thing I can do is try to help my colleagues around the world understand geographical differences – Europeans don't necessarily feel the same way about everything as west-coast Americans do. Some parts of Europe, for example, have good reasons to be very concerned about data security and privacy. And we hear those concerns. We've been doing a lot of work to improve that, particularly in the wake of Edward Snowden.

Some of these challenges actually fuel creativity at Google (although not in quite the same way as our free cafeteria). Creativity loves constraints. It loves to try to find innovative ways to make life better – even though there are things you might want to do, but can't. And, whether we work for Google or not, that's one of the great opportunities for all of us.



# Twenty-Six Things I Think I've Learned

Chris Chibnall



Chris Chibnall is an award-winning screenwriter, playwright and executive producer. His credits include Broadchurch, The Great Train Robbery: A Robber's Tale and A Copper's Tale, Doctor Who, United and Life on Mars.

Dear Screenwriter of Tomorrow,

You want to write television drama? Great decision. It's the best job in the world (whatever anyone else in the rest of this book tells you). If things work out, you'll get to work with legions of talented artists and technicians to create a story that people want to know the ending of. It's difficult, exhausting, inspiring and thrilling. It's a privileged position.

It's also a constant learning experience. Here are some of the things I've learned, as a writer and executive producer, about the process of creativity in general and television drama in particular. They are entirely subjective. Others may disagree. But I've lived them, and I believe them.

*Be alive to the world.  
Study people. We  
watch stories to see  
ourselves, reflected.*

1 If you want to be a writer, write. Go on, get on with it. Now. Stop reading! Why are you still reading? Am I not making myself clear? Start now. No-one can stop you, apart from yourself.

2 Be alive to the world. Watch and listen. Eavesdrop (discreetly, obviously) in cafés, on buses and trains. Study people. We watch stories to see ourselves, reflected. Keep notes, however fragmentary.

3 You probably won't be paid to write for a long time. You'll do loads of crappy jobs. This will frustrate you – but you can write when you're not on shift. I know how infuriating it is when people tell you that you are amassing life experience – and that the people who annoy you, or who you're in unrequited love with, will one day provide you with fodder for characters – but it's all true. Every experience can be mined – the people and situations will be material later on. And probably not in the way you expect.

4 Keep going. Rejection is the training course of writing. If you really really want to be a writer, you will be. Despite all those letters saying "no".

5 Learn your craft. Talent is your innate ability, craft is how hard you work and improve it. There are now many books on writing structure. Read a few: John Yorke's *Into The Woods* and Robert McKee's *Story* (which'll save you a few hundred quid on the course) aren't bad places to start. However, treat them with a degree of caution, don't follow them slavishly (story is never binary) but take the things that seem useful.

6 Learn to spot and accept a good note. Cultivate the habit of being open: suggestions and notes from others are not automatically a threat. A writer who dismisses or fights every note in the room is not necessarily getting the best from people around them. But notes are hard, particularly when a script feels precious to you. Often the best way to take notes is to listen and write things down. Take a day or two to digest the notes and consider responses. Then discuss again.

7 If one person gives you a note you violently disagree with, you're probably allowed to discount it. If three people give you the same note; it's not them, it's you.

8 Make space for your own creativity. Social media and the constant buzz of information and opinion is enticing. Creativity comes from quiet, space and solitude. Allow yourself time to think. Take a long walk somewhere peaceful and beautiful (that's how Broadchurch came to me, walking along the Jurassic Coast). Make time and space to be alone with your thoughts.

9 Know your medium. Watch everything. Everything. There are some people (though they're rare these days) working in television who don't watch television. These people are idiots (they also chose the wrong job). To connect with an audience, you need to understand what it's like to be the audience. Watch all genres (and not just in drama). Watch documentaries, sport, comedy, game shows, reality TV. There's always a narrative to learn from and characters to study. Understand what delights you, what frustrated you, and why. There are always lessons to be learned, and re-learned.

10 Keep filling your creative tank. Visual art, music, sport: drink it all in. Everything is a stimulus.

11 Creativity is inherently positive: you're bringing something into existence that wasn't there before. It's not a place for negative or cynical or snarky people. Cynical is not cool. Unless you're 11, then it's very cool. After that, no. Surround yourself with tough, smart, supportive, critical friends.

12 Be generous to other creative people: it's easy to criticise or slam other people's work. It doesn't speak well of you. You'll never be proud of yourself in hindsight. There's plenty of great stuff out there to praise and learn from – do that instead.

13 You only need one person to believe in you, at the start. Bombard everyone. Send scripts out, make films on your phone and post links, write plays for tiny performance spaces with audiences of one. You have to work hard to find that one person who will ignite your career.

14 Take Tarantino's advice from when he was starting out: always work with people better than you. You'll learn and improve. As you go through your career, find collaborators who improve you. Then, keep them close. For me, working with people like Russell T Davies, Jane Featherstone and Sam Hoyle has been a continual education.

15 Understand that drama production is a collaborative medium. If you want to write, hand it over and be left alone, write a novel. Screen drama is collaborative alchemy: you need to work closely with, and understand, people who have skills which will illuminate, ignite and improve your work. Learn to understand their jobs, too. Even if you're at the start of your career, ask if you can shadow people, or make tea for them. Strive to be an all-round filmmaker,

*Creativity is inherently positive: you're bringing something into existence that wasn't there before. It's not a place for negative or cynical or snarky people.*

not just a solitary writer. We have tone meetings on Broadchurch, in order for every department head to offer their input and brilliance about how the show can be realised and usually improved.

16 Write great parts for actors. They have to be in make-up at 5am. Make it worth their while.

17 That drama script you just wrote? It probably needs more jokes.

18 Exercise. Seriously. You'll live longer, which is good. But also, your brain and mind and creativity will work loads better after exercise. And you'll be in a better mood. Am I sounding too much like your mum?

19 The job of showrunner – which combines writing and executive producing – is now open in the UK. It's an amazing, tricky job – shepherding your script all the way through production and on to screen. It takes a long time to acquire the skills and experience to do this job: start now. If possible, spend some time in an edit (either on your own scripts or someone else's. Just get in there). It'll transform the way you write. Every episode of Broadchurch has gone through restructuring in the edit: you see resonances and connections in filmed material that wasn't on the page and rework accordingly. The edit is the final draft of the script.

20 No piece of work will ever be perfect.

21 Some processes and experiences are terrible. These are the instructive ones. Though they are hell to live through, you often learn more from failure than from success. The painful processes become anecdotes over time (though it doesn't make them any easier to live through).

22 Be delightful (even if people around you aren't).

23 Work harder and longer hours than any of your peers. This and numbers 20 and 22 are the shortest and most important on this list.

24 Treat praise and criticism the same. If you're able to avoid all coverage, even better. These days there's an immediate tsunami of responses to any piece of work. Most of the really talented people I know stay away from all of it. Years ago, when I worked for Complicite as an admin assistant, the wonderful Geraldine McEwan was giving an extraordinary performance in a production of Ionesco's *The Chairs*. She made it clear at the start she never wanted to hear about the reviews when they came out. "I've made my decisions in the rehearsal room," she said. And she was right:

you'll come to know whether you're satisfied with the work. Only you can know how well you've done the job, under the circumstances you were given. Judge your success not by other people's criteria, but by how well you achieved what you set out to do.

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25 Keep going. This applies at all stages of your career, whether you're starting out, coming off a huge international hit, or a flop at a fringe theatre. Follow Churchill's maxim: "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." Keep filling the blank page. That's the job.

26 Enjoy it. The process of making drama is hard. Many things can go wrong. There's never enough time or money. People sometimes don't like what you've done. But did I mention? It's the best job in the world.

There. Now I've given you a few tips, go out there, write a blindingly good script and make me obsolete. I can't wait to watch what you come up with.

Yours, Chris



# The Future's Already Here

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Henry Mason



**H**enry Mason is the Managing Director of TrendWatching, who help forward-thinking business professionals in 180+ countries understand consumer behaviour, needs & wants to uncover compelling & profitable innovation opportunities. He is a sought-after speaker and regularly quoted as a trend expert in the global press.

The sci-fi author William Gibson once said, "The future is already here – it just isn't very evenly distributed." Decades later, that insight still underpins our business here at TrendWatching. We deliberately take an approach that spans different regions around the world – we have offices in New York, Singapore, Lagos, Sao Paulo and London – and different businesses. One of the best ways to achieve future insight in one industry – such as television – is to ask, "What's happening in other industries that isn't happening in our industry? What's happening on the fringes?"

Because the chances are, the TV business will eventually be pulled towards those bits of the future that are already here – even if they don't currently look relevant.

Uber is a great example. Just a couple of years ago, taking a taxi in London involved gesticulating from the pavement and making sure you had a wad of tenners. Then along came

Uber. People quickly realised that they could order a car on their phone, that it would turn up within minutes, and that they didn't even need any cash. After such a seamless experience, people start to wonder why they can't do that in other areas of their lives. And don't be fooled, by the way, if there is currently no sign that a game-changer is on its way in the TV industry. London's black-cab drivers didn't see it coming, either. Maybe your TV equivalent of Uber is arriving now.

If it is, how do you spot it? One important trend is that we now live in a world of transparency and abundant information. It's becoming ever easier to trust people and start-ups, even if they don't have a 15-year or 500-year history. Even if it's only his second month on the job, your Uber driver has already been rated on the app, by other passengers who are just like you. More to the point, if any Uber driver had attacked one of their passengers, it would have been all over the press and social media. Traditionally, your brand was what gave you credibility – it was a symbol of quality that you built up over decades. But start-ups don't have any skeletons in their closets – unlike some bigger

*One important trend is that we now live in a world of transparency and abundant information.*

companies, who (without naming names) have proved again and again that they cannot be trusted to behave. So large organisations have lost control of the narrative, with both their consumers and their employees.

Some big companies have tried to co-opt the start-up narrative, but they won't succeed. They're trying to seem sexy and agile and flexible – even though these are things that they're just never going to be. The cleverer thing for a multinational to do – what Coca-Cola and Unilever are increasingly doing, for example – is to say that it's not necessarily their job to come up with cool, creative concepts. It's their job to find those ideas and scale them – to incubate and accelerate them. That can be a very appealing sales pitch to cool, creative people: if you're ambitious, and you want to have a really big impact, you can do that better and faster with us at our big corporation. Because, like it or not, we have distribution and marketing capacity in 150 countries, and even in a world of digital distribution, these still enable us to achieve mass scale and reach very quickly.

Look at the music industry, for example. They basically no longer need to do A&R – YouTube does it for them. What the record companies then do is get CDs into Walmart and bookings into Glastonbury.

What does all this mean for traditional TV companies, who want to recruit the best and the brightest creatives? Well, first it means that they need to look beyond the TV industry, to find out who's competing with them for talent. Why do creative people go and work at Google, or at Airbnb? The answer is not just for the free canteen, or the bean bags in the office. Those visible perks are a symptom, not a cause, of why Silicon Valley (in particular) has become such a draw for talent. The real pull is a desire to do things differently. A desire to change the world. That's much more powerful than being able to wear flip-flops to the office (which, frankly, gets pretty old pretty quickly).

The fact is that in today's information economy, creative people can take many more roles – and in many more industries – than they could even 10 years ago. The most valuable currency in the information economy is consumers'

attention – and that, in turn, means that the ability to capture people’s attention is one of the skills that the economy values most highly. Even though “storyteller” isn’t (yet) a job title, people whose talent is in telling stories can do that not just in TV and films, but online, in games, in advertising and in apps. In a nutshell: the BBC is competing for talent with Facebook. Visual geniuses might come up with the smartphone game Monument Valley, but could equally be working on Downton Abbey. The nature of work is changing, but actually a lot of the skills are fungible.

Happily for the TV industry, it is no stranger to two big trends in how the work actually gets done: the “gig economy” and the “Hollywood model”. Increasingly, even outside the creative industries, people don’t drive to work at the same business park in Swindon for 10 or 15 years – they work on a succession of projects, or “gigs”. And the Hollywood model is a supercharged

version of that – projects that pull together teams of highly talented people, as happens on big-budget feature films. With information flowing ever more speedily, it’s increasingly possible for small, ad hoc groups of people to have an outsized impact – and TV companies can take advantage of that.

Another big opportunity for the TV industry – not to mention viewers at home – is that the line between TV and the internet is blurring. Viewers today want a “second screen” experience alongside their favourite shows, and mobile viewing unlocks possibilities for TV companies to appeal to audiences in much richer ways. Of course there’s a tension in that, because TV remains a passive experience for the vast majority of its viewers. However the next wave of technologies, augmented reality and virtual reality, will offer another new set of opportunities.

In shaping their consumer propositions, TV companies will increasingly need to ask themselves: “What are we actually selling?” Sometimes, it may still just be passive entertainment – stuff people switch on when they get home

*The ability to capture people’s attention is one of the skills that the economy values most highly.*

from work. But are there other jobs you could be doing? *Lost* was a communal experience, which fans discussed endlessly. *The X Factor* is a participatory experience, while *MasterChef* sells an aspirational dream.

As TV takes on more flavours, and as more narratives and interactions spring up around it, it gains many more commercial possibilities. We went through a similar transformation at TrendWatching when we decided – contrary to existing industry wisdom – to start giving away a lot of our information for free. These days, the content in our industry is largely commoditised: it's not difficult to find out what the big trends are. What we at TrendWatching now do for paying clients – to whom, by the way, we charge a disruptively low subscription fee – is to package the information nicely and make it easier to use. We're not just selling content any more – we're selling convenience (in telling the persuasive trend stories that clients need) and validation (by telling those stories in a way that is compelling).

I'd urge TV companies to also push themselves that one step further, and ask: "What business are we really in?" Start from fundamental human needs: the desire for social status, the desire for self-improvement, the desire to be entertained, the power of connection. These things don't change – which is why Shakespeare never goes out of fashion and why songs are always basically about the same thing.

What changes is how businesses service those needs. Look at *House of Cards* on Netflix, for example. It's a re-tread of a 25-year-old show, with a 50-something actor playing the lead. Incredibly traditional. What's different is that Netflix delivers it on demand, and you can watch the whole series all at once. Netflix delivers not only a compelling TV show, but also a good experience, a good business model, a good distribution channel. In the TV industry, just as in the trend-watching industry, great content isn't enough anymore. What else have you got?

In a  
Writers' Room  
Far, Far Away...

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Piv Bernth



Piv Bernth is the head of drama at DR, Denmark's national broadcaster, with a slate that includes *The Legacy* and *The Bridge*. She previously produced all three seasons of *The Killing*.

If you want to run an organisation with creativity at its heart, I have some advice that might surprise you: keep the “creatives” as far away from the “organisation” as you can.

I’m Head of Drama at DR, which is Denmark’s national broadcaster – roughly the equivalent of the BBC. Our shows have included Borgen and 1864, as well as current hits such as The Legacy and The Bridge. Until 2012, I spent seven years producing The Killing.

At the moment, we have four drama series in production or pre-production. All of the creative talent for these shows – the “software”, as I sometimes say – comes from outside DR. Those directors, actors, producers and writers need a creative room where they can work – and the most important thing that I can do, to help those people do their best work, is to protect their creative room.

*My advice is to keep the “creatives” as far away from the “organisation” as you can.*

The writers’ room for The Legacy is out at Søborg, a suburb of Copenhagen, in one of the few buildings that remain of DR’s former campus headquarters. As they write and produce their final season, The Legacy’s producer Karoline Leth, creator Maya Ilsøe and their team really don’t need to know what’s going on back at head office. I meet regularly with the controller of our main channel, DR1, who’s a great partner for discussing how our drama series are going. But if those discussions include disagreements, or if I hit corporate problems or whatever... well, Karoline and Maya don’t always need to know. I think that’s one of the reasons why producers and writers like to work with us – because they feel that the freedom in the creative room is real.

Another thing that we do differently from many other broadcasters is to give the writers a little more time when they’re first starting out on a project. It’s not that expensive to have a couple of writers sitting in a room, figuring stuff out. We did that with Jeppe Gjervig Gram, who had been a staff writer on Borgen,

and who is now the creator of our big new financial crime drama *Follow the Money*. He had funding for about six months with his producer and one other writer, so they got really grounded in the concept. It only becomes expensive when you start to get lots of other people in – the director, and more writers. Investing a little more money in that “cheap” period is really vital, I think.

And it’s really vital for me to get involved with some of those early scripts, too, to make sure that what is on the page is the same as what was pitched. Some people argue that subtlety and nuance can come when the actors and the director get involved, but I don’t agree. As the Americans say: “If it ain’t in the script, you ain’t going to get it.” And, of course, the more you know when you start shooting, the less expensive that shoot will be.

When we came up with *The Killing*, about 10 years ago now, it started in a similar way to Jeppe’s project. It was just me and Søren Sveistrup, the creator, in a room. That was out in Søborg too, in a building that’s since been demolished – in the old DR “barracks”. It was a single-storey wooden building round a courtyard, like a summer house. The rain would sometimes come in through the roof and there was a sort of weird sweet smell in the air – so we had someone from the cleaning company come in. They took up the floorboards and found lots of dead rats underneath. It was a real creative paradise.

Anyway, Søren was a big fan of the thriller genre – he got me to watch the Brad Pitt movie *Seven*, as well as many other thriller movies. We decided to try and come up with a thriller series. The first idea that we really pinned down was that the father of the victim would end up going on a journey with the killer. Fans of *The Killing* will remember that climactic scene, at the end of season 1, where Theis headed off into the woods with... Well, I won’t do any spoilers here. But he headed off into the woods with the killer.

Even though it was police detective Sarah Lund who turned into the show’s iconic character, she developed more slowly. Actress Sofie Gråbøl was pregnant with her daughter, so initially she said a flat “no” to doing another TV series. I said to her, “Will you at least read the script, and then say ‘no?’” It was

Søren's script that persuaded her – and from then on, Sofie participated in the development of the character.

Søren was obsessed with sending Sarah into dark places – alleys, pipelines below the streets, empty warehouses – where she had to keep going and going, she couldn't turn back. She did things most women would never dream of. If I were faced with something like that, I would get a taxi home, lock my door, take a tranquilliser and go to sleep.

We also never imagined that that sweater would become the international symbol of The Killing. The idea was just to dress Sarah down. A ponytail, blue jeans, boots, a sweater, a jacket and out she goes to fight crime. Wearing more or less the same clothes every day. Not being dirty or anything – it was the lack of vanity that was important.

*We never imagined that sweater would become the international symbol of The Killing.*

All the time we were developing this complex, subtle series, my boss left us alone. Ingolf Gabold was then the Head of Drama at DR, and he said, "I trust that you can do it."

I had also had another mentor who was very important to me. When I was first starting out in the 1980s, getting my education as a director at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, I met Birgitte Price. She was an actress at the Royal Theatre, but she also directed, and she asked me to help her with a production. It was Birgitte who introduced me to television, because she became Head of Drama at DR.

The biggest gift that Birgitte gave me was her confidence in me. She really trusted me and my talent, and she kept saying, "You've got to go all the way, Piv." She was a fighter herself. I remember once being in an editing room, and Birgitte came in. She'd been with executives at the top level of DR – they'd cut her budget and wanted her to make a lot of changes. She said, "I'm going to resign, I'm out of this." Then four hours later, she came back. She said, "I know

what I'm going to do." She had a complete plan of how she was going to operate with these cuts and changes – she stayed on, of course. I was so impressed by that. I respected her so much. (Birgitte also gave DR another important gift that I mustn't leave out: her son, the writer Adam Price, who created Borgen).

Of course over the years, I've also learned from management styles that I didn't like so much. When I was a producer, we used to have very strict meetings, where you sat with an agenda. It was pretty much just the management talking to the producers. Each producer only had five minutes to say how their show was going – "I had some trouble with this or that, but I'll solve it", that kind of thing – and we had to listen to the management talking about corporate stuff for an hour and a half.

As Head of Drama, I don't do that any more. Every Wednesday, from 9.00am until 11.00am, I have a meeting with all the producers. We don't have an agenda, we don't write down what's been said. We have a very open discussion about everything – I hope that the producers feel they can say anything to me. It's a room full of trust and confidence. Someone might say, "I need a director in October, do you know anyone who would be good?" We might talk about the trends in American TV drama from the LA screenings, or about European and UK drama. It can be anything.

I want to stay away from a "management" mind-set. In Denmark, DR is often perceived the way the BBC seems to be perceived in the UK – bureaucratic and expensive and traditional. But nobody else would have made *The Killing* like we did, with the story of just one killer told over 20 episodes. Or *Borgen*. "We're doing a series about Danish politics." People said, "You've gone crazy." Yet it turned into a worldwide hit. And *The Legacy* could have just been a soap – but at DR, Maya has been able to give the characters and the conflicts such depth and complexity.

It's actually because we're a long-established public service broadcaster that we have to make sure we don't get stuck in a comfort zone. It's because we are funded by a licence fee, because the Danish people pay our wages, that we

have to be first movers. New writers must come into DR and tell their stories. In a way, we're a little bit like Sarah Lund as she heads down a dark alley into the unknown. We don't know how it will turn out – but we just have to keep going.



# Mix It Up

John Kampfner



John Kampfner is Chief Executive of the Creative Industries Federation, the national membership organisation for the public arts, cultural education and creative industries. He is Chair of Turner Contemporary and the Clore Social Leadership Programme.

In the spring of 2008, I got a call from some headhunters. When the young woman told me the role she was trying to fill, I initially thought she must have dialled the wrong number. I had just left the editorship of the *New Statesman*, after more than two decades as a journalist – and Odgers, the headhunters, were looking for a chairman for the new Turner Contemporary art gallery. I certainly had no experience in charity governance or arts management. But one thing led to another, and I ended up chairing the team who got the gallery up and running.

Just as my chairmanship of Turner Contemporary was an unexpected appointment, we tried to set up the gallery in a new way. In parts of the arts world, you can still find the last vestiges of a 1990s-style public-subsidy entitlement culture – a grumpy chorus of “Where’s our money?” But Turner Contemporary relies on a mix of public money

and private money, and we run it as a business: we delivered the amazing David Chipperfield building in Margate on time, on budget, and it’s now one of the most visited art galleries outside London. I believe that all good organisations, whether public or private, should be managed as businesses. If you talk to the directors of London’s most venerable theatres and art galleries, they’ll say that they’re running businesses. The Creative Industries Federation, of which I’m now chief executive, is a not-for-profit organisation – but we still need to be savvy and well-managed.

The Federation is the recently-founded national membership organisation for the public arts, cultural education and the creative industries. It’s been called a “CBI for the creative industries”, and that’s not too wide of the mark. At the Federation, we believe that business is good for the arts – just as the arts are good for business. And we want everybody to join in. If you’re under 25, you can join as an individual member for £40 a year – compared to the annual subscription fee for our biggest corporate members, who pay £15,000.

*I believe that all good organisations, whether public or private, should be managed as businesses.*

The Federation's membership policy is just one practical manifestation of our belief that it's crucially important to mix things up – to make connections between people who might not otherwise meet. Because the arts provide talent not just for, say, our film and TV companies, but for many other British success stories. Take Jaguar Land Rover, where Ian Callum is the design director. Ian will flash up a picture of Jaguar's high-tech new car – and then he will say, "Many of the people who designed this car went to art school." At the Federation, we understand that the path to creative business success is seldom linear – and we want to start more conversations between the public, private and third sectors that will fuel British stories like Jaguar Land Rover.

One of the Federation's Government policy priorities is to encourage proper funding for the arts. In July, we did an event with Josh Berger, who runs Warner Bros in the UK, and Tracey Barber, from Havas Creative Group. They powerfully argued that a healthy, publicly-invested arts sector will – over the next 10 to 15 years – feed the next generation of talent into their companies. And that will benefit the British economy as a whole.

The education of that next generation is crucial, too – it's another policy priority for the Federation. Arts education is not, as it's often perceived, just soft and cuddly. It's actually central to the British economy and to a healthy society. We must widen the focus on STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics education – into STEAM, by adding the arts. Lack of proper arts education damages sectors such as engineering, just as much as it hurts the creative industries. Nobel laureates in the sciences are 17 times more likely than the average scientist to be an artist; 12 times more likely to be a poet; and four times more likely to be a musician. Remember that it's uniquely English for schoolchildren to be pressurised into choosing between arts and sciences – and then, when they go to university, to be forced to do so. Why not embrace both? In America, Germany and other countries, high-school students and undergraduates study a mix of subjects.

When British students graduate, by the way, they shouldn't have to come to London to work in the creative industries. In Manchester, with some good

Government intervention and with the BBC's investment in Salford, we now have a "micro economy" of creative businesses. It's thriving, which means that youngsters in Manchester don't have to move to London to start a career in TV or apps. Similarly, the University of Sunderland is doing incredible work by partnering with digital start-ups in their city – as are the University of Leeds, and the University of the West of England in Bristol. The list keeps growing. And the Federation plays a part in creating a "joined-up" ecosystem in each of these cities – we are doing a series of 24 "roadshow" events outside London.

The barriers to starting a creative career have, of course, historically not just been regional. Our third policy priority at the Federation is to broaden access to the creative industries, with our diversity agenda. For example: we are not offering any unpaid internships in our own office. A lot of the opportunities in the TV

industry are still based on who you know and, for 21-year-old first-jobbers, that can lead to a very self-selecting pool of applicants. And, to persuade TV companies to widen their recruitment, I don't have to rely on lofty ideals about social mobility. I can just point to the bottom line.

If you have a company whose creative juices come from a narrow social pool, your content will be narrow too. If your content is narrow, your audience will be narrow. And if your audience is narrow, your profit margin will be small. Diversity – both social and racial – is simply good business. It's another area in which mixing things up makes perfect sense. (Though diversity issues don't always take the shape that you might imagine: at Turner Contemporary in Margate, the single demographic that we have found hardest to reach is working-class, middle-aged, white men.)

The best way to increase diversity in your organisation is to manually change the way that you recruit. Identify the groups that you're lacking, and go out and find them. If you receive 20 CVs, and they're all from people in a narrow

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social circle, you just have to try a bit harder elsewhere. You will find all sorts of untapped resources. In our small team at the Federation, we have two people who came from apprenticeship schemes that are part-supported by the Government, Creative Access (which is for BAME graduates) and The Creative Society. Both of those youngsters are brilliant.

It's a similar story at the other end of the seniority ladder. What strikes me, when I go to an arts launch or first night in London, is how many of the same faces I see in the VIP area. London is a city of 10million people, and yet you'd think that the arts are run by about 100 of them. Those faces are, of course, often white and male and middle class. As a city and as a country, we will simply never achieve our full creative potential until we make that top table more diverse. Which is why, at the Federation, that's another area where we're intentionally trying to mix things up a bit.

Our Advisory Council includes – quite rightly – luminaries such as Amanda Nevill, the chief executive of the BFI, and Darren Henley, who heads Arts Council England. But it also includes Mitu Khandaker-Kokoris, who runs a games start-up in Portsmouth, and 23-year-old Amahra Spence, whose company MAIA Creatives in Birmingham gives business advice to young creatives. We are deliberately bringing in people who might be a little overawed initially, a little bit out of their comfort zone. And we're saying to them, "This is your space too."

We want everybody in the room so that we foster not just inter-generational cross-fertilisation – important though that is – but cross-fertilisation between creative disciplines, too. Such interactions are not only good for creativity – and culture more generally – but we are convinced that they bring direct financial and business benefits, too. So alongside the TV executive, we have the fashion designer, the cellist, the computer gamer, the ceramicist. Because one day, one of those conversations might just lead to a TV success story on the same scale as Jaguar Land Rover. When you mix it up a bit, who knows what great things will happen?

# The Science of Creativity

Dougal Wilson



Dougal Wilson has directed music videos for Jarvis Cocker, Will Young and Coldplay and TV ads for Ikea, Coca-Cola, Stella Artois and most notably, John Lewis. His awards include Gold and Silver Cannes Lions, two MTV video award nominations, and a Grammy nomination.

When people talk about creativity, there is often the suggestion that it's an art, not a science, and when people talk about the creative industries it's always about the arts – music, film and theatre. But in my own work in the creative sector – as a director of commercials and music videos – I take a bit more of a rational, perhaps almost scientific approach to the task at hand.

I think of the process as less about “creativity” and more about “problem-solving”. When interpreting the bare bones of a script for an ad, I first strip the project back to its most basic core idea, then thoroughly work through how I get from one point to the next. It could be a new Christmas commercial for John Lewis, or wrestling with the difficulties of trying to create a video for Coldplay when the band themselves are on tour in another country. The process is the same: an attempt to look at the problem from all angles before you hope for that spark of inspiration which makes everything fall into place.

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Having studied physics at university (albeit not entirely successfully), I find scientists to be just as stimulating as artists. Science is full of inspirational flashes, for example Albert Einstein's lateral insight to describe gravity as an effect of the curving of space-time by matter, rather than the centuries-accepted Newtonian view that it's a force that attracts two bodies together.

I was quite romantic about science when I went off to study – maybe because of my love for 2001: A Space Odyssey, and other science fiction films like Silent Running, even Star Wars. I also loved drawing, watching films and playing in bands, so I started drawing posters for university plays and events. I heard about the slightly more down-to-earth role of a copywriter in an ad agency, the person who comes up with the ideas for commercials, posters or radio ads. I realised it was basically a professional version of all the things I enjoyed in my extra-curricular activities.

Being terrified of London, I was lucky enough to get a copywriting job at the Leith Agency in Edinburgh and was able to go out to see adverts being filmed. There I became aware of another role that had not really crossed my radar – the commercials director. Of course, everyone knows about feature film directors, but there's another whole array of directors who specialise in commercials and music videos. Big names such as Alan Parker and Ridley Scott began that way, and more recently directors like Jonathan Glazer, Spike Jonze and Michel Gondry. It seemed to be a job that encompassed all the things I was originally interested in: ideas, photography, music, filming things – and jokes.

The two strands to my work operate slightly differently. With music videos, I will usually write the idea. Often all you are given is the track and maybe just a very short brief. Just a paragraph, often a bit vague, like "the band would like something dark". With an ad, you are given the idea in the form of a basic script from the ad agency. Often I'm simply trying to execute that written idea without messing it up and hopefully using my experience to make a lot of practical decisions to interpret it in the best way possible. There isn't always room to improvise but there are always a lot of pragmatic decisions to make and details to think through.

I find there are some great ways to increase your productivity. The right environment helps, as does the luxury of time. Fear of failure can be a good motivator, as well as an added pressure. But for me, I don't really like to approach anything until I have looked at it rigorously – often to the point where I'm actually sick of thinking about it. I find this assembles some kind of foundation in my brain, as if the problem becomes thoroughly embedded in the subconscious. And because you have thought about it so much – maybe it's something neurological – an idea often then creeps up on you when you least expect it. Like when you're taking a break from work and doing something entirely different, such as going for a jog or washing the dishes.

Your brain will make the connection if you have done the painful bit. People often talk about this idea of putting in 10,000 hours – for instance, in learning an instrument - and it helps the brain to make all these shortcuts. It is probably

a similar, albeit truncated, process where the problem is fully embedded in your mind to allow inspiration to strike.

Paul McCartney has often claimed that Yesterday came to him fully-formed in a dream, but without the groundwork of endless hours of performing at the Star Club in Hamburg earlier in his career, or the hours huddled with John Lennon perfecting chord sequences, maybe it would never have happened.

You have to condition yourself to be predisposed to make connections. To do that I usually lock myself away in my office or my study at home. All my thoughts go into a notebook, usually a separate one for every ad or video. The ideas process is a solitary activity for me; but the notebook is my equivalent of someone to bounce ideas off. I find it easier to come up with ideas when I've got a pen in my hand – I like drawing and writing. If you can draw your idea, then hopefully you can film your idea.

*You have to condition yourself to be predisposed to make connections.*

One of the early ads that really helped me get established was for Orange and involved a couple dancing through a house. We had to devise a dance routine, so in the notebook I plotted the journey through different rooms – the kitchen, hall, bathroom, stairs, and I wrote lots of ideas about what could happen in each one. Then I tried to work this into a narrative. Start here, go there, go there, pass through a doorway then come back into here. This process is different for every job, but I have to work through the most basic ideas first.

It was a similar process for one of my John Lewis ads. In it, all the contents of a house move out by themselves, so the first thing I did was a brainstorming session with myself to work out how that could happen – a baby could get pulled along on a snake-like rug, the clothes could walk, the spacehopper could bounce, the books could shuffle. I look at the overall idea before getting to specifics. Everything should hang off that core idea.

I've always enjoyed contrasting glamorous pop stars with slightly less glamorous British situations – for example Jarvis Cocker as a cab driver, Dizzee Rascal as an Andy Pandy-style children's TV show and Coldplay as Punch and Judy characters, which was the puppet show equivalent of a stadium rock gig, but set in a humble church hall somewhere. The miniature show, with mini speaker stacks, lighting rigs and wooden roadies, also acted as a reference to what the band were doing in real life instead of featuring in their own video.

When I find myself struggling, I take the problem to a new environment – going for a run often works. With music videos, I have a crafty technique where I put the song I'm working on at number seven on my running playlist. The logic is that by the time I get to that point, the endorphins have kicked in and my brain is at its most positive. With the combination of the song and the movement of the running, I might come up with something fresh or a new take on a half-formed idea. Ironically, one idea which came out of that process was a video for The Temper Trap, which itself involved people running.

The advertising industry has seen great changes since I began; the budgets are often smaller, there are fewer long-form films or those which are greeted by a hushed anticipation, like the Levi's and Guinness campaigns. It is partly to do with advertising spend being spread across the internet. But good, well executed ideas can still make an impact.

My advice to anyone who wants to go into this line of work would be to just start making things yourself, as I did. Think of some ideas and simply film them. If you've only got the budget to do something in your kitchen, work around that. I built up a showreel with low production values – making videos for my friends' bands in Edinburgh, then doing little ads for the T In the Park music festival. Before long, I had a VHS tape with about ten things I had done. It was enough for me to be invited in for a chat with Blink Productions who were prepared to take a chance representing me.

Looking back to when I was a youth, I didn't even know a job like mine existed – school careers advice wasn't exactly full of that kind of thing. And in terms

of a career, I just wanted to do something I enjoyed, something as close to a hobby as possible. It's much harder to do well in a job you don't truly enjoy.

It may appear like something of a left-field choice to have made that move from science to the profession I pursued. But in many ways it has been a perfect union of my love of science and the arts. I'm very glad my academic background has given me a logical approach to creativity as a problem-solving exercise. And while I often regret not following physics further, hopefully I'm a bit better at my current vocation than I would have been as a scientist.



In a  
Creative Business,  
Creativity Comes First

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Tim Hincks



Tim Hincks is President of the super-indie Endemol Shine Group. He was previously Chief Executive Officer of Endemol UK, has overseen hits including Big Brother, Fortitude and Pointless, and is a former Executive Chair of the Edinburgh International TV Festival.

In 1990 Peter Bazalgette interviewed me for a job at his production company, Bazal. I'd never met Baz before, and we started discussing the sort of programmes that I might produce for him. I enjoyed the meeting very much. In fact, so much that (in a sudden burst of overconfidence) I grandly suggested that there was surely a market for a political show. A political panel show. Or a satirical one. That, I said, was the show that we should do. And Baz replied, "OK, well, you'd better come up with it then."

At that moment, the penny dropped. I realised that if you want to be involved in the creative side of television then you can't sit back and wait for shows to magically appear. The creative world is not a dreamy world. In a way it's actually very, very practical. You need to make things happen. Oh, and you need a very healthy relationship with rejection.

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I got the job at Bazal, oddly enough. And I did come up with a political panel show, which I think – though I have no scientific evidence for this – might have been the worst idea ever created in the history of the world. I believe I pitched it to Tim Gardam, who was at that time head of programmes at Channel 4. It was deeply embarrassing, and all completely wrong... but that's not the point, I'd argue. The point is that I felt like I was up and running.

Twenty-five long years later, the same principles still hold true at Endemol Shine. Under our roof, we've got ambitious shows such as Fortitude, Peaky Blinders, The Million Pound Drop, MasterChef, The Island with Bear Grylls and, of course, Big Brother. But all of these huge shows started here in a room somewhere, in which someone bravely ventured, "Wouldn't it be a good idea if...?" All these shows will have had moments of doubt as they developed and were nurtured. All these shows would have been subjected to constant discussion, and benefited from the occasional happy accident: the right host at the right time, the last-minute twist in the format which proves transformative. But, crucially, the creative teams all made the jump from just ruminating about

an idea, to turning it into a piece of content, with a beginning, a middle and an end.

Of course, what you don't want to do is to fall into the trap of becoming a production line. Or even feeling like you're one. It's about letting ideas flow gently and gradually – and not worrying, frankly, about the bottom line. Although Endemol (and now Endemol Shine) has always been a very commercially-focused organisation, the fact is that we quite simply do not talk about the numbers. Or at least, we don't make the error – the huge error, the category error – of believing it would be helpful, in the creative process, to say how great it would be if we hit our financial targets. I am completely comfortable with the centuries-old tradition of art and commerce working hand in hand. The Beatles wrote some of their best work after they were rich. It's just that, when it comes down to it, you simply have to put creativity first and really mean it. The numbers, the financial performance, have to come a firm second.

Creative success brings certain challenges though. And for companies that reach a certain size, the key challenge is, I suppose, to not feel big. Do many people really get a kick out of a feeling that they work for a "big company"? So you need to accommodate and nurture a thousand different cultures. Because creative people won't hang around for long if you tell them how to think, or what they should create.

However the bit where scale can be helpful comes in a few shapes and sizes. First, there's the sense of being in a creative community. Being a creative can be a very, very lonely place, and you get very exposed. Your shows go out and they're by no means always liked. Trust me on that. Being part of a team, a family, means that you've got friends – a gang of people who'll dust you down, and who have your best interests at heart.

Secondly, there are also obvious commercial advantages to being in a big group. That scale is increasingly important, because of the unseemly fight over rights that characterises today's media landscape. Whether as an

organisation, or as an individual creative, it seems to me a fundamental and self-evident truth that you should get a fair share in the ownership of what you create. So it's a huge advantage to be part of an organisation that will fight your commercial and creative corner.

Thirdly, commercial success permits experimentation. If, like Endemol Shine, you've got very big brands out there that are working well – though, of course, that's an art in itself, and by no means a given – then you can take creative risks with new shows. Many of those new projects won't make any money whatsoever, but that doesn't stop the company's wheels from turning. And you can back your own content – invest in it, and invest in areas like online digital video, or data, which smaller companies frankly don't have the resources or time to do.

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But the key to a company like Endemol Shine, is that the labels and production companies are headed by creative people. And there are also creative people right at the top of the group – at the HQ, if you will. Elsewhere in the industry, it seems to me that a false distinction is often created, between the creative side of the business (on the one hand) and the business side of the business (on the other). I find it surprising how few “creative” organisations are led and run by creative people.

Production companies, in particular, don't have a licence fee. We don't have subscription revenue. The only way we can exist is if our ideas take flight. Without those creative ideas, the business is over. So for us at Endemol Shine, there's no distinction between “creative” and “business”. Creativity is the business.

And what a business. As things stand, UK creative entrepreneurship is in great shape. The UK still punches way above its weight on the global stage. UK talent is in demand like never before. Indeed, I would argue that Endemol Shine's

biggest competitor for off-screen talent isn't other production businesses in the sector – it's actually people setting up their own businesses. That's the key challenge for companies like ours – competing with the start-up culture. It's a culture that we've got to address, and that we've got to embrace, because those are the people that we need to recruit and retain.

We can make a good start by recognising as we begin every day at the office – you know, around 11.30am on a busy day – that we're only ever as good as the talented people who want to make a home here. Forget that, and you might as well stay home and watch telly.

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