In COVID times, do we want commercial brains or creative ones?

Back in 2010, a major survey carried out by IBM – 1500 CEO's, 60 countries and 33 industries worldwide - concluded that creativity, ahead of rigor, management discipline, integrity or even vision, was required to navigate the increasingly complex world. Today, with all the uncertainty of Covid-19, never has it been more important to think and act creatively.

GENIUS YOU wanted to find out whether this core skill has managed to earn its place at the corporate table. Is creativity flourishing or floundering? So we decided to carry out some in-depth analysis.

The GENIUS YOU proposition is built around a psychometric survey. The purpose of the 40 question survey is to help individuals better understand their creative strengths **(see slides 3 and 4).** The survey also contains one open-ended question which asks respondents to comment on the state of creativity and innovation in their own company.

In the summer of 2020, GENIUS YOU analysed 2152 surveys completed by individuals across a 6 year period (2015 to 2020). The respondents came from 17 different international companies in 10 different sectors **(slide 5).** The functions represented were mainly Marketing, Innovation and Brand Management. This report includes a summary of the results **(slides 6 and 7)** as well as some hypotheses, questions and conclusions **(slides 8 and 9).**

The overarching question is this: Is the logical, rational, commercially focused left brain beginning to outmuscle the intuitive, expansive and expressive right brain in the corporate environment? And in the current climate, shouldn't we be heading in the opposite direction?

The 5 creative behaviours

The generative engine

The enablers

EXPLORER

I enjoy coming up with fresh and exciting ideas, inspired by people and places, the new and the old, and alternative ways of thinking! My sense of adventure knows no bounds and I'm always unearthing items of interest. As a result, my head is forever brimming full of possibilities that I'm always keen to share with those around me.

DETECTIVE

I am good at sifting through large amounts of evidence and information. I search for small kernels of ideas that might lead to BIG opportunities with great commercial potential. Using my strong sense of intuition, I find interesting links within the data, identifying patterns that others might not readily detect.

ARCHITECT

I translate and transform the nugget of an idea into something more tangible and complete by creating a clear and compelling blueprint. My skill is using appropriate language, illustrations or prototypes to articulate this succinctly in a way which makes it easy for others to fully understand and buy into.

JUDGE

My job is to look at the alternative choices, weigh up the pros and cons for each and then select the right one to take forward to the next stage. I establish clear and unbiased criteria when leading the decision-making process, but I'm equally comfortable using my gut instinct if and when required.

Conductor

My core skill is harmonising the creative strengths of every team member. I know what makes each person tick and when they can best contribute to the task at hand. I ensure that the team works well together to reach its objective, but when needed, I'll step in to resolve conflict so that we all play to the same tune.

# From survey completion to results, aka your CREATIVE MIX
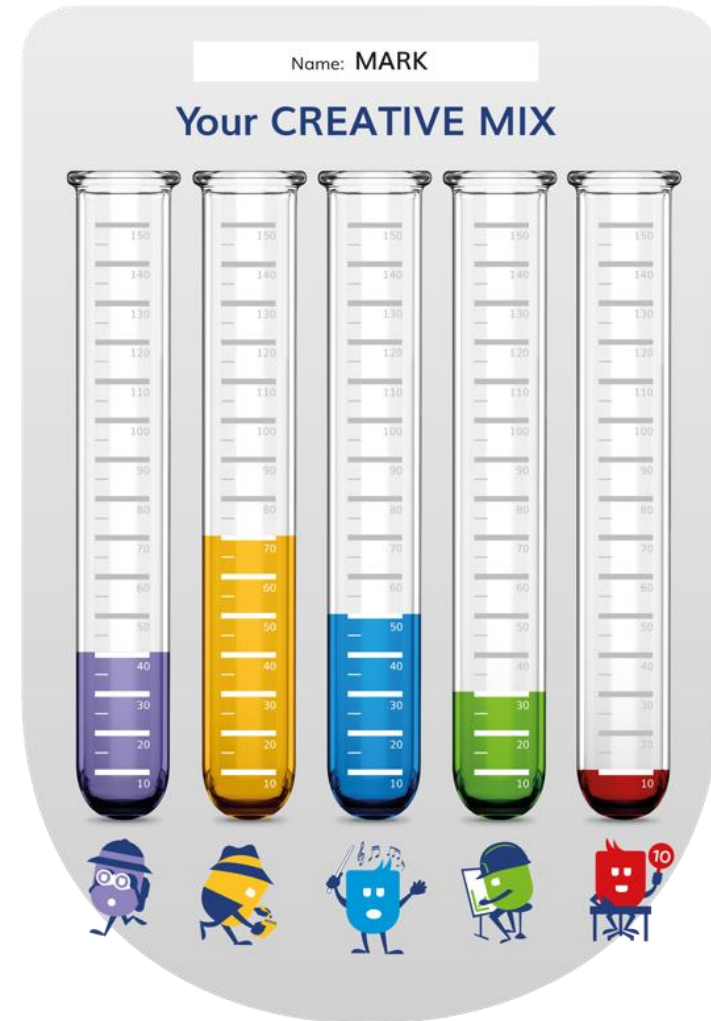
The psychometric survey, time frame, numbers of companies and respondents, industry sectors

The psychometric survey	The time frame for this study	No. of companies	No. of respondents	Sectors
40 questions, 8 questions for each of the 5 behaviours Developed and validated between 2008 and 2012 in tandem with Sheffield University	2015 to August 2020	17	2152	• Fast moving consumer goods • Consumer health • Retail clothing • Grocery retail • Drinks • Mobile communication • Entertainment • Media • Transport • Communication agencies

Based on the survey results, the Judge is the strongest creative behaviour

The generative engine

The enablers

EXPLORER	DETECTIVE	ARCHITECT	JUDGE	Conductor
20.6%	9.0%	14.9%	30.7%	24.9%
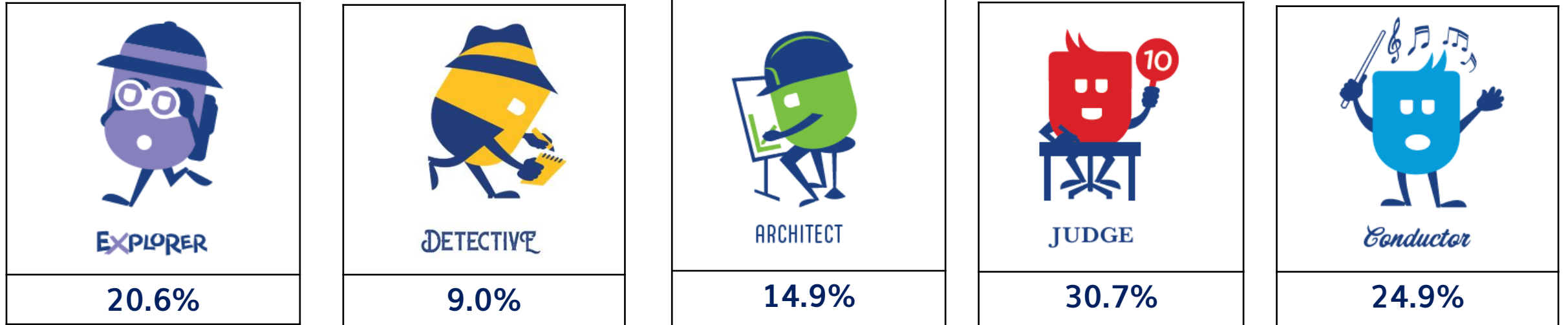
Percentage of all survey respondents between 2015 and September 2020 who had this as their strongest behaviour

| Other findings based on the data → | Judge has held the top spot overall during the last 3 years | Out of 17 companies, Judge has been top in all but 4 of these | Detective has held the bottom spot in every year since 2015 and in all but 3 companies | The generative engine (Explorer, Detective and Architect) has accounted for 44.% of creative strength versus 55.6% for the Enablers (Judge and Conductor) |

8 themes that emerged from the open-ended question:
"Do you have any suggestions for how your organisation can improve creativity at work?"

Time poverty for creativity	Burdened by process overload	Experimentation and entrepreneur mindset	Broadening horizons by looking outside	Internal sharing and cross pollination	More brainstorming and workshops	More inspiring work environment	Ideas Forums and creative hubs
10.3% (% of total comments)	**12.2%**	**10.8%**	**12.2%**	**22.8%**	**18.2%**	**4.5%**	**8.8%**
"Our biggest downfall within the business is not giving enough time to creative thinking. We need to put importance on thinking as much as doing. The team are constantly executing projects but spend little time crafting new, creative ideas." **Verbatim respondent quotes taken from survey**	"Protect creative ideas from the organization's bureaucracy. Large organizations can kill such initiatives through committees and reviews."	"Permission to fail and to fail fast (test, learn, fail, scale) Permission to experiment and to try new and different things. To be courageous and brave - not to always revert to what we've always done."	"The opportunity to get out of the office more often could work well. For example going out as a team to see how different brands in different industries are doing things - whether it's a focus on luxury brands or something completely different like seeing how an opera communicates a story in different ways."	"As there are so many brand teams all working on different projects with different outcomes, it could be beneficial to do more sharing between teams to help nurture new ideas and inform decisions".	"Have more structured brainstorms, which go beyond the first stage of just dropping ideas and really enhance the team's different ways of being creative. Encourage team-building activities which bring out each member's skills."	"How do we both create the time and space to be able to foster creativity? Would be great to set aside creative thinking time /brainstorming time...but also important to find the physical space that supports this type of work. It almost never happens in a boardroom, meeting room"	"Encourage others to submit their ideas, allow honesty and be susceptible to feedback. Create an anonymous communication forum so that others can submit their ideas freely and they feel listened to"

What's the narrative from the results of the study? What questions are raised?

Do we need more Judges or more Explorers and Detectives?	The results from the survey were quite conclusive. In each of the years, 2015 to 2020, and for the majority of the companies, **Judge** was the dominant creative behaviour. Is this a question of recruitment? Is it related to the kind of work that people are doing? Or does it suggest that companies place more value on the evaluative versus the exploratory? What will companies need during Covid-19 times?
Is there any time left in the day to be creatively 'inefficient'?	In principle, creativity does not thrive under pressure. It doesn't work that way. It requires time to gestate, incubate, ponder, iterate. Somewhat ironically, it requires managers to be productively inefficient! This is simply how the brain works. Dreaming time rather than deadlines. What can companies do to create time and space to breathe creatively?
Do we really need more templates and boxes to fill in?	Processes, guidelines, funnels, tunnels, systems, templates, toolkits. The logic. Undoubtedly, companies require these in order to function, to enable everybody to operate on the same page. But doesn't there come a point where the logic begins to stifle the magic required to achieve the main goal – win in the market place? Does every process really need all those steps and boxes?
Exciting Entrepreneurs or Efficient Executives? What do you want to be?	The rallying cry to adopt more of an entrepreneurial mindset, to be agile, to fail fast, to test and learn, to innovate lean........is undoubtedly becoming louder in the Big Corporates. However, is the desire matched by the conviction to make this happen on the ground? Time poverty and process overload are simply not compatible with entrepreneurship.
We have to get out of the office more....or do we?	Since the year dot, we have bemoaned the fact that marketers spend too many hours at their desks. Not enough time is spent out and about, speaking to consumers, learning from other categories. And yet still, the behaviour doesn't really change. Maybe Covid can help? What can we do to bring the outside in? How can we use the virtual space to expand our horizons without leaving our desks?

What's the narrative from the results of the study? What questions are raised? (cont.)

If only we could tap in to the far corners of our massive corporate brain...	Managers have always been frustrated by being unable to access and leverage the information, knowledge and experience that resides within the company at large. Creativity often requires stimulus and a starting point. It more often than not involves building on the ideas of others rather than originating from scratch. So what can we do to cross-pollinate, cross-fertilise? This theme was the outright winner!!
.....and then workshop together more often to make things happen....	The clamour for more workshop time was the second strongest theme. It is probably the physical and executional manifestation of the theme above. Why are managers not workshopping as much as they would like? It's probably linked to the 'time poverty' and 'process overload' themes. So, how can we make workshops even more effective and efficient to justify their inclusion on the daily agenda?
Working environment: The Covid-19 silver lining?	So, everybody would love to work in a physical space that inspires, that allows the creative juices to flow. Once again, this is simply a pre-requisite for the creative brain. Can more home-working provide us with the answer? Or at least for some of us? And can the office environment be re-purposed, providing a space where we can be at our generative best?
Everybody is creative, not just the chosen few	And if that is the case, then let's allow everybody in the company to contribute to the creative effort. Idea forums, creative hubs, suggestion boxes are not new news. But more often than not, they are cosmetic exercises designed to prove that companies believe in the importance of both creativity and the collective. Isn't now the perfect time to maximise every single person's creative muscles?

"Life is Magic.
Because you got trapped
in the limitations of your logic,
you are not experiencing the Magic."

Sadhguru, Indian author

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