SUCCESS IN CONCEPTUAL AGE: THE CREATIVE HUMAN RESOURCES NEEDED

AB. AZIZ SHUAIB, OLALERE FOLASAYO E.

Faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage

Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

ABSTRACT

With the global trend tending towards the conceptual age, the economy and society built on the logical order of the information age is now tending towards emotional and perceptual world. Therefore, consumers now demands to be treated individually because they no longer want product that just do the right thing but also make them feel the right way. With this trend, it's now necessary for the creative workers to change their mind-set and build their innovative and creative skills towards the upcoming conceptual age. In the light of this, this paper gives the general overview of the developmental and design trend, illuminates on the characteristics of creative workers required in the conceptual age and also proposed the types of trainings needed to build their innovative and creative skills for the coming conceptual age.

*Keyword:*conceptual age,creative skills, perceptual world.

1.0 THE NATURAL SEQUENCE

The inception of information age has transformed consumption demand from quantitative to perceptual consumption (Wang, 2011), where people not only live in a society with logical order but also living in a perceptual world. However, we are now moving from an economy and a society built on logical linear, computer like capabilities of "the information age" to an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathic, big-picture capabilities called "The Conceptual Age" (Pink, 2005) (Figure 1). Therefore, the future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind; that is, creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers and meaning makers. These people (artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers) will now reap society's richest rewards and its greatest joys(Pink, 2005).
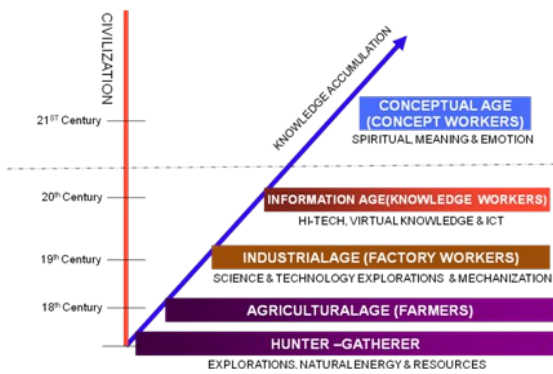
Figure 1: The developmental trend

The earliest humans known as "hunter-gatherers" lived primarily on scavenging where, rather than killing large animals themselves for meat, they used carcasses of large animals killed by other predators or carcasses from animals that died by natural causes (David & Mark, 1990). They are society in which most or all their food are obtained from wild plants and animals (Marlowe, 2005). Following the invention of "Agricultural Age", hunter-gathers where displaced by farming and pastoralist groups. This group rely mainly on domesticated species (plants and animals), physical strength, and manual skill and were labour intensive. They were intuitively driven with spiritual attachment, poverty and feudalism.

However, the advent of industrial revolution between 1750 to 1850 brought about the "Industrial Age" where agriculture, manufacturing, mining, transportation and technology had a profound effect on the social, economic and cultural conditions of the times.

Industrial age was technology and material driven which result in materialism, greed, war automation and mass production. The next civilization was the "Information Age" which is a knowledge based period that is characterised by the ability of individuals to transfer information freely, and to have instant access to information that would have been difficult or impossible to find previously. It's a knowledge driven period which enhance automation, skills and also result in globalisation. The key focus of information age is knowledge acquisition and application.

With the emergence of cross domain disciplines like outsourcing, we are witnessing a trend towards creative knowledge, rational application and innovation. We are now progressing from an era that was information-dependent towards the era that revolves around concept development; this age is referred to as "Conceptual Age" which will be dominated by new senses (design, story, symphony, empathy, play and meaning), creating a need to diverge from the current reliance on linear and sequential algorithmic practices in outsourcing and to adopt cognition based approaches (Patki, T., Patki, &Kulkarni, 2009).

2.0   TYPES OF BRAIN

Pink (2005) divided brain into the left-brain (L-directed) and the right-brain (R-directed). The left-brain is sequential, logical and analytical which was considered important for the information age. However, they are necessary but no longer sufficient; therefore, the R-brain with nonlinear, intuitive and holistic qualities will determine who flourishes and who flounders in the conceptual age. It has six senses which include design, story, symphony, empathy, play and meaning (Pink, 2005).

- *Design*: design is critical to every business; therefore, to make products more user-friendly, beautiful, energy-efficient, ergonomic and useful, R-brain is necessary because it allows us to understand how people use products in order to make products not just functional but also beautiful and emotionally engaging.

- *Story*: This is how information has traditionally been passed from one generation to another. According to Pink (2005), story is a context enriched by emotion, therefore story remains important because of its emotional impact which makes information stick.

- *Symphony*: Pink (2005) defines symphony to be largely about relationships. Therefore, the conceptual age will reward those who can see connections between seemly unrelated areas. Those who can blend their knowledge of diverse talents and skills to push the boundary of accepted practices (Pink, 2005). This is because the greatest demand will not be analysis but synthesis.

- *Empathy:* this is an ability to enter someone else's shoe, to care for others. This attribute will be highly needed in the conceptual age; it will distinguish those who thrive.

- *Play:* According to Pink (2005), conceptual age will allow us to combine both work and play. The focus of play will be on the process rather than product; activity rather than its result; relationships rather than outcome (Huitt, 2007). Therefore, laughter and light-heartedness will be of benefit not only to health, but also professional performance because too much sobriety can be bad for career and worse for the general well-being (Pink, 2005).

- *Meaning:* This is the basic desire to find purpose and meaning in one's life (Pink, 2005). Meaning has become a

central aspect of our work and our lives; therefore pursuing it is obviously not a simple task.

Table 1 below illustrates the types of brain and developmental trend at each age.

Table 1: Brain needed at each age and the developmental trend

PERIOD	TREND	BRAIN	IMPACT
Conceptual Age	Art & Humanity	Left & Right Brain	Spiritual, meaning & Emotion
Information Age, Knowledge Based	Science & Technology	Left Brain	Hi-Tech, Virtual Knowledge & Communication
Industrial Age	Science & Technology	Left Brain	Science &Technology Exploration & Mechanization
Agricultural Age	Art & Technology	Left & Right Brain	Exploration, Natural energy & Resources

3.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE REQUIRED IN CONCEPTUAL AGE

Figure 2 classified the set of people needed at the conceptual age into four groups which include; Theorists, Organizers, Humanitarians and Innovators.
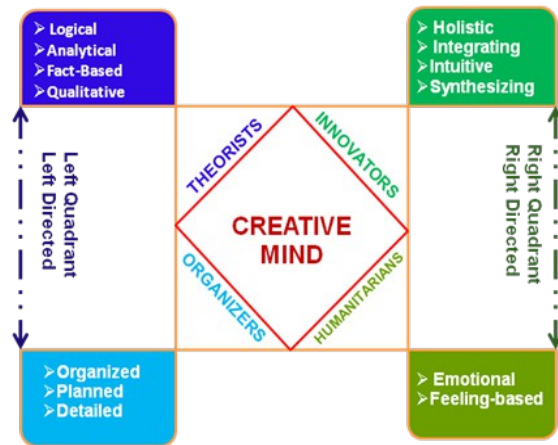

Figure 2: The Characteristics of people required in conceptual age

Theorists: These are people who can adapt and integrate observations into complex and logically sound theories. They think problems through in a step by step way. They tend to be perfectionists who like to fit things into a rational scheme. They are logical and analytical rather than subjective in their thinking and are also fact-based.

Organizers: These are people with ability to rally together resources such as people, materials and funders to create more efficient process, smarter solutions and better businesses. Some of their qualities are that, they are organised and sequential in thinking, and also planned into details.

Innovators: innovators are people with ability to introduce into reality something better than before (Wikipedia, 2012). They have a holistic mind set, intuitive in

thinking, ability to integrate and synthesis ideas.

Humanitarians: these are people with ethic of kindness. They have interpersonal skills to communicate and interact with other people and ability to meet people's emotional need.

Therefore, in a world of tossed by abundance, Asia and automation, in which L-directed thinking (Science-based) remains necessary but no longer sufficient, we must become proficient in R-directed thinking (Art & Humanity-based) and master aptitudes that are high concept and high touch. We need to perform work that overseas knowledge workers can't do cheaper, that computers can't do faster and that satisfies the aesthetic, emotional and spiritual demands of a prosperous time (Pink, 2005).

4.0   DESIGN TREND

With the great transformation taking place this present time, consumers are now shifting from materialistic needs to emotional needs (Rolf, 2009). Therefore, people will get richer, wealthier and smarter but will seek more on spiritual products. However, Rolf Jensen's theory has raised the question if this will be the end of mass marketing era, because, focussing on small brand and individualism, producer would become

smaller in quantity but still uphold their unique traditional way. With these added values, price will be high, but notwithstanding, the money is believed to be paid willingly and happily by future consumers who want to consume not just product but the story.

According to Rolf (2009), if we limit ourselves to thinking in terms of realities, facts and knowledge, we have got the future all wrong because it is made, not of certainties, but is present in our thoughts and dreams only. That's while many companies now search for the future in the rear view mirror, because, that is where certainties are found; there , we find the part of reality that can be verified. Therefore, the strict scientific model of logic is a trap that prevents us from looking ahead (Rolf, 2009).

The influence of emotion in relation to products is evident in product, purchase and use (Norman, 2004); therefore, choosing a product is largely an emotional process. Research by Boatright&Cagan (2010) revealed that people pay for products that address their emotional needs in all types of business; that means, product emotion is critical to the long-term success of any product that consumers interact with directly or indirectly. That was why Pieter Desmet tried to unravel the relationship between product and emotion.

Along with his research, he developed a product emotion meter (PrEmo) with which emotion towards a product can be measured (Desmet, 2002). Also, Professor MitsuoNagamachi in the 1970s developed Kansei Engineering to translate feelings and impressions into product parameters. Therefore, to be relevant in the conceptual age, it is indeed necessary to develop the R-brain that can create product that has emotional and spiritual contents coupled with aesthetic appearance.

5.0 TYPES OF TRAINING (COURSES) FOR CONCEPTUAL AGE

In order to be fully grounded for the up-coming conceptual age, we need to develop ourselves towards the characteristics required to thrive in this period. Therefore, to be theorists, organizers, innovators and humanitarians, some specific training are required has shown in Figure 3 below.
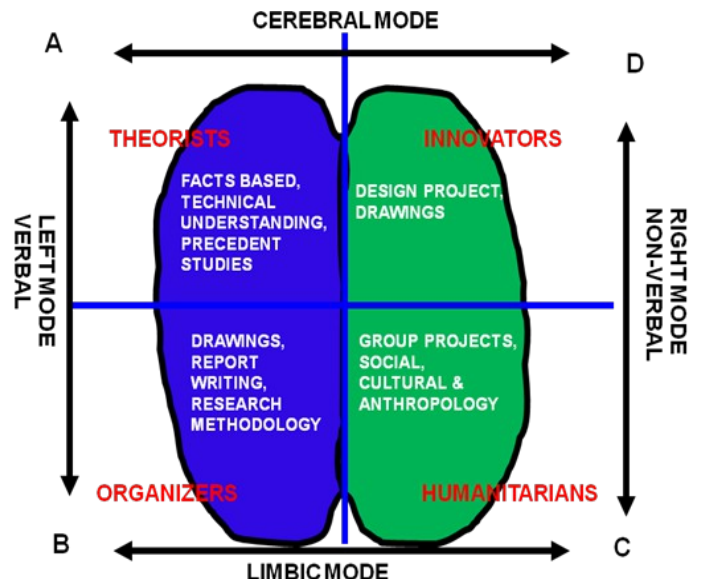

Figure 3: Specific trainings for conceptual age

i. *Theorists:* To be able to integrate observation into complex and logically sound theories, we must train ourselves on how to build facts based theories, technical understanding of what is achievable and also provide guidance to ensure current thinking is integrated into decisions or project.

ii. *Organizer:* An organizer needs to be trained on drawing skills, how to write reports and also how to develop research methodology. These will help in organising resources to create efficient processes.

iii. *Innovators:* An intended innovator must learn the systematic approach needed in designing project and

must also develop drawing skill as this will help in conceptualizing new ideas.

iv.   *Humanitarians:* humanitarian must learn how to manage group projects, study and understand the social and cultural life of people, their organisation, physical traits, behaviour and their variations among different groups of humans. This knowledge will help build interpersonal skills in communicating and interacting with other people and will also help to meet other people's emotional needs.

6.0. CONCLUSION

It is important for those who are involved in creative industries to have the ability to know how to bring about a product experience in the conceptual age because, designing for greatness based upon misguided vision will lead to failure (Luke, 2009). Therefore, the best solution would be for creative workers to invest more time and effort in building themselves towards the characteristics required in the conceptual age. This will help them to conceptualize ideas that are suitable, make better valued judgement and also lower the risk of product failing.

REFERENCE

Boatwright, P., &Cagan, J. (2010). *Product emotion: The way to captive customers.*

David, A. & Mark, C. (1990). *The last rain forest: A world conservation atlas* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press, USA. ISBN-10:0195208366

Desmet, P. (2002). *Designing emotions.* Delft, The Netherlands: Delft University Press.

Huitt, W. (2007). *Success in the Conceptual Age: Another paradigm shift.* Paper delivered at the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Georgia Educational Research Association, Savannah, GA, October 26. Retrieved [date], from http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/papers/conceptual-age.pdf

Luke, W. (2009). *The structure, influence and application of emotion in product design.* Leicester, UK: De Montfort University.

Marlowe, F. W. (2005).*Hunter-gatherers and human evolution.* Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News and Reviews, 14(2): 54-67, doi:10.1002/evan.20046

Norman, D. (2004). *Emotion design: Why we love (or hate) everyday things.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Patki, A. B., Patki, T., &Kulkarni, M. (2009).*Transformation from the information age to the conceptual age: Impact on outsourcing.* Retrieved September 30, 2012 from http://ssrn.com/abstract=1350536

Pink, D. H. (2005). *A whole new mind*. Riverhead Books: Penguin Group (USA) Inc. New York.

Rolf, J. (2009). *Dream society* (2nd ed.). Mcgraw Hill Prof (Business), ISBN-10-0071486496

Wang, M. (2011). Discussion on product perceptual design in information age. *Applied Mechanics & Materials, 121-126*, 1997-2001.

Wikipedia. (2012). *Innovators*. Retrieved September29, 2012, from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/innovators