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Thriving in the Contemporary Business World: How to Empower Employees with the Creative Mindset, Skillset and Toolset.

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Thriving in the Contemporary Business World:
How to Empower Employees with the Creative Mindset, Skillset and Toolset.

An Abstract of a Project
in
Creativity and Change Leadership

by
Ardjan Robbé Groskamp

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Science

May 2024

Buffalo State University
State University of New York
Department of Creativity and Change Leadership

Abstract

In response to the increasing emphasis on creativity as a vital skill in today's professional landscape, this master's project explores contemporary academic research and literature to identify best practices regarding the creative mind, skill and toolset in an organizational setting focused on meeting employee needs. Drawing from a rich array of sources over the last five years, including academic journals, business reports, and books, the project synthesizes current trends and forecasts future developments in the field. The study aims to bridge the gap between the growing demand for creativity and the existing supply of solutions within organizational contexts. By applying Creative Change Leadership skills and the Creative Problem Solving framework, the project seeks actionable outcomes to empower employees with the necessary mindset, skillset, and toolset for creativity in the modern business environment. Central to the project's objectives is the cultivation of employees' awareness of their personal creative potential. Leveraging insights from established research and innovative approaches, the project endeavors to produce a tangible product or service to address the identified gaps in the market. Through a comprehensive exploration of the literature and practical application of creative leadership principles, this project contributes to advancing our understanding of organizational creativity and equipping individuals and businesses with the mindset, skillset and toolset, to thrive in an ever-evolving landscape.

Keywords: Organizational creativity, creative mindset, skillset, toolset, best practices, creative performance, VUCA world.



Ardjan Robbé Groskamp

2024-05-07

Date

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Acknowledgements

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”

- Leon C. Megginson –

At this very moment, the first stroke on my keyboard marks the end of this masters’ project. It also marks the beginning of a new era. An era in which I am passionate and dedicated to serving the professional creative community and the world as a creative change leader. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to have participated in this life changing master’s program. I was fortunate to be taught and inspired by the best of the best teachers.

My special thanks go out to Dr. Sue Keller Mathers. She is a phenomenal teacher with a huge passion for creativity. Thank you for guiding me and supporting me through a very challenging period in my life. My special thanks also go out to Elien my soundboard partner. Thank you for your challenging perspectives. My special thanks go out to my dear family and friends who supported me. My special thanks go out to all cohort members, teachers and employees at Buffalo State who inspired, taught and supported me.

To translate all the accumulated knowledge and experiences into a tangible value proposition was a very rewarding and fascinating journey. The whole universe is the ultimate manifestation of creativity in action. What a blessing it is to be creative!

Table of Contents

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT	1
Purpose and Description of the Project	1
Personal Goals	3
SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES	4
SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN.....	6
SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES	9
Fixed versus Growth Mindset	13
The Best Practices of the Creative Mind, Skill & Toolset for Employees.....	13
The Process of Selecting one Aspect of Employee Creativity	22
Synthesis of the Contemporary Landscape & Future Forecasting	22
The platform prototype CreaConnect.....	34
SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS.....	38
SECTION SIX: CONCLUSIONS	39
REFERENCES	40
APPENDICES	44
Appendix A: 45The Fixed versus the Growth Mindset	45
Appendix B: The Mindset Mindmap	46
Appendix C: Annotated Bibliography	47
Appendix D: Google trends: creativity vs innovation	55

List of Figures

Figure 1: A schematic overview of the concept mindset.....	10
Figure 2: A schematic overview on the dynamics of the mindset.....	11
Figure 3: Common Themes Organizational Creativity and Innovation	25
Figure 4: Google trends: Comparative search queries for creativity and innovation.....	29
Figure 5: Google trends: Comparative search queries for innovation and creativity.....	30
Figure 6: Google trends: fast rising queries related to soft skills.....	31
Figure 7: Google trends: interest over time in AI.....	32

List of Tables

Table 1: Project Timeline and Action Plan.....	7
Table 2: Key Evaluation Assessments Towards Goals.....	8

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Purpose and Description of the Project

Ever since the evolution and recognition of deliberate creativity as a seriously established science and research discipline, (Guilford, 1950; Parnes, 1961; Rhodes, 1961), there has been a noticeable and consistent trend of academic journals, business reports, and books, emphasizing the importance of creativity as a highly sought-after skill in general, and more specifically the professional business environment (Hart, 2021; Masterson, 2023; Puccio & Lohiser, 2020). The famous presidential address to the American Psychological Association initiated the big push of interest in the subject of creativity (Rhodes, 1961, p. 305). As a result the study of organizational creativity in a professional business environment has been and continues to be subject to extensive research. Research studies (Puccio et al., 2006; Scott et al., 2004; Woodman et al., 1993) indicate that deliberate creativity works in such environments and have provided useful and practical recommendations. The focus of my Master's of Science in Creativity and Change Leadership is empowering employees with a creative mindset, skillset and toolset in the contemporary business world. In addition, I will try to identify possible gaps between the current market supply and demand

Rationale for Selection

My rationale for choosing this direction stems from two incidents where I have been exposed to the importance of creativity as a trainable life skill. Based on my background I always had an intuitive approach to what creativity means. I believed creativity was an artistic process. I believed creativity was all about coming up with crazy, original, and entertaining ideas. In my experience, it was all based on curiosity, and being unique. I did not believe it was a teachable skill but something you were born with. In my perception it was the result of random strikes of inspiration. In 2013, during my multimedia design class, I had my first encounter with a book that introduced deliberate creativity techniques. The book was published by one of the leading creativity institutes in Europe. According to Byttemier (2009) “Creativity is something you can learn. Creativity is a skill.” (p. 7). In 2018, I embarked on an entrepreneurial journey and founded my very own digital agency under the name of King Boo. However, as the agency evolved, it underwent a rebranding process and emerged as BigBangg. It was an area characterized by fast developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and process-driven jobs forecasted to go away (Petroni, 2018). In light of these circumstances, I was both fascinated and obsessed with unraveling the essence of human creativity. Fueling my fascination, I conducted a brief creativity workshop for my fellow entrepreneurs, whom I had connected with at a networking event. As I prepared for the workshop, a breakthrough moment occurred, providing me with my initial clue in understanding the true nature of creativity. In an interesting LinkedIn article that I stumbled upon while researching for the workshop, I discovered an interesting definition of why creativity holds unparalleled significance as a skill in today's world (Petroni, 2018). In this article, Stefan Mumaw defined creativity as the art of problem-solving with relevance and novelty.

Now that I have experienced the power of individual creativity and creative problem solving, I want to help employees thrive in an automated, AI driven world where creativity is on the decline, because I used to be an employee, struggling to be fully conscious about and leverage deliberate creativity.

Personal Goals

1. Research based exploration on contemporary (last 5 years) academic journals and articles regarding the best practices related to organizational creativity and what employees need.
2. Synthesize what is most important today and forecast what is coming in the future.
3. To identify gaps between the current need for creativity as a high demand skill and the current supply / solutions.
4. Apply Creative Change Leadership skills and the CPS framework to work towards actionable outcomes.
5. Help employees to become more conscious about their personal creative power. The insights of the Master's project are used for producing a product or service. (independent study)

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES

To reach the formulated goals, a deep dive into contemporary journals and articles is needed, and the synthesis of this information. All emotional ups and downs, challenges and overcoming challenges need to be recorded in a creative journal. Based on this research the aim is to identify gaps between the current need for creativity as a high demand skill and the current supply / solutions in an organizational context. Below, a list of resources to explore further.

Bytsebier, I. (2009). *Creativiteit hoe?zo!* Lannoo Uitgeverij.

Guilford, J. P. (1950). Creativity. *American Psychologist*, 5(9), 444-454

<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0063487>

Hart, J. (2021, September 28) *Why creativity is the top business skill in the post-Covid*

Workplace LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-creativity-top-business-skill-post-covid-workplace-joe-hart/>

Masterson, V. (2023, May 1). *Future of jobs: These are the most in-demand skills in 2023-and*

beyond. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills/>

Parnes, S. J. (1961). Effects of extended effort in creative problem solving.

Journal of Educational Psychology, 52(3), 117–122. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0044650>

Petrone, P. (2018, December 31). *Why creativity is the most important skill in the world*.

LinkedIn.

<https://www.linkedin.com/business/learning/blog/top-skills-and-courses/why-creativity-is-the-most-important-skill-in-the-world>

Puccio, G. J., Firestien, R. L., Coyle, C. M., & Masucci, C. (2006).

A Review of the effectiveness of CPS training: A focus on workplace issues. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 15(1), 19–33. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8691.2006.00366.x>

Puccio, G. J., & Lohiser, A. (2020). The case for creativity in higher education:

Preparing students for life and work in the 21st century. *Kindai Management Review*, 8, 30-47.

Rhodes, M. (1961). An Analysis of Creativity. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 42(7), 305–310.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20342603>

Scott, G., Leritz, L. E., & Mumford, M. D. (2004). The effectiveness of creativity training: A quantitative review. *Creativity Research Journal*, 16(4), 361–388.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10400410409534549>

Woodman, R. W., Sawyer, J. E., & Griffin, R. W. (1993). Toward a theory of organizational creativity. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(2), 293–321.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1993.3997517>

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

The project timeline and action plan outline key milestones and support mechanisms. Elien serves as a sounding board throughout the creative journey. Dr. Susan Keller Mathers provides approval and guidance at critical stages. Her experience and expertise are crucial for reflection and gaining a more sophisticated perspective. Key evaluation assessments ensure alignment with project goals, including synthesizing research, identifying gaps, applying creative change leadership skills, and promoting employee consciousness through collaborative product or service development. See Table 1 for project timeline and action plan and Table 2 for key evaluation assessments towards goals.

Table 1*Project Timeline and Action Plan*

Activity	Deadline	Hours to complete	Support needed
Document creative journey	Ongoing until submission Master's project	1 hour per week	Soundboard partner Elien
Submit concept paper / Proposal	February 12	12	Dr. Susan Keller Mathers
Approval proposal	February 14		
Create mindmap	February 14	2	Soundboard partner Elien
Conduct research, gather insights and distill one aspect of employee creativity.	February 29	40	The focus Aspect is Mindset
Create annotated bibliography	March 10	40	Librarian Buffalo State
Conduct informal interviews with relevant professionals	March 17	8	Professional network
Submit sections 1-3	March 18	-	Dr. Susan Keller Mathers
Identify gaps and create solution	March 30	25	
Submit sections 4-6	April 21	-	Dr. Susan Keller Mathers
Submit Master's project	April 29	-	Dr. Susan Keller Mathers
Uploading to digital commons	May 6	-	-
Class presentation	May 15	10	Soundboard partner Elien

Table 2

Key evaluation assessments towards goals.

Goals	Deliverable
Research based exploration on contemporary (last 5 years) academic journals and articles regarding the best practices related to organizational creativity and what employees need.	Annotated bibliography with insights translated into a mind map and easy to understand drawings.
Synthesize what is most important today and forecast what is coming in the future.	Make a presentation about the insights
To identify gaps between the current need for creativity as a high demand skill and the current supply / solutions	A presentation with insights, translated into a prototype / solution.
Apply Creative Change Leadership skills and the CPS framework to work towards actionable outcomes.	Document challenges and how I overcame them by applying CPS and creative leadership skills.
Help employees to become more conscious about their personal creative power by producing a product or service.	A yet to defined product or service in collaboration with my independent study.

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

The Human Mind

Since the human mindset is an important variable in this paper the concept of the mind needs clarification. What exactly does the concept of the mind mean in this context? The human mind is a fascinating topic. It is useful to start with a general understanding of the mind. Every individual has a mind, that is to say, they perceive, they have sensations, emotions, beliefs, thoughts, purposes, and desires (Armstrong, 2013). Men also have mindsets. Cognitive abilities are a part of the domain of the intellect and the mind (Guilford, 1956). Therefore, the next logical step is to define the concept of mindset in relation to cognitive abilities.

Mindset and Cognitive Abilities

It is important to mention the difference between the mind and cognition as the mind entails phenomenal consciousness and qualia, how we feel about something, while cognition is simply the act of perceiving, learning, remembering, and so forth (Adams & Aizawa, 2019). The mindset encompasses individual attitudes, which is particularly intriguing when considering that cognitive abilities involve recognizing patterns and memory (Bakhshandeh, 2022). This interplay highlights how each person's unique perception of patterns can lead to distinct insights, underscoring the individuality of the human mind.

The Creative Mindset

The concept of a creative mindset holds a place of paramount importance. It is widely acknowledged that creativity is not just an innate talent, but a skill that can be cultivated and

nurtured. This perspective is rooted in the belief that every individual possesses an inherent potential for creativity. This potential is often likened to a “divine spark”, a metaphor that suggests creativity is a fundamental, almost sacred, component of human nature. Alex Osborn, a pioneer in the field of creative problem-solving, eloquently encapsulated this idea in his seminal work. He stated, “All of us are endowed with a divine spark, and that spark is our creative imagination. By implementing it with willpower we can acquire a habit of creative effort. And to my mind, creative effort is the key to a good life” (Osborn, 1953, p. 1). This quote underscores the belief that creativity is not just an inborn trait but something that can be actively developed and harnessed through determination and practice. The creative skillset and consequently creative toolset are attributes of the creative mindset. Figure 1 provides a schematic overview of the concept mindset and Figure 2 provides a schematic overview of the dynamics of mindset.

Figure 1

Schematic overview of the concept mindset

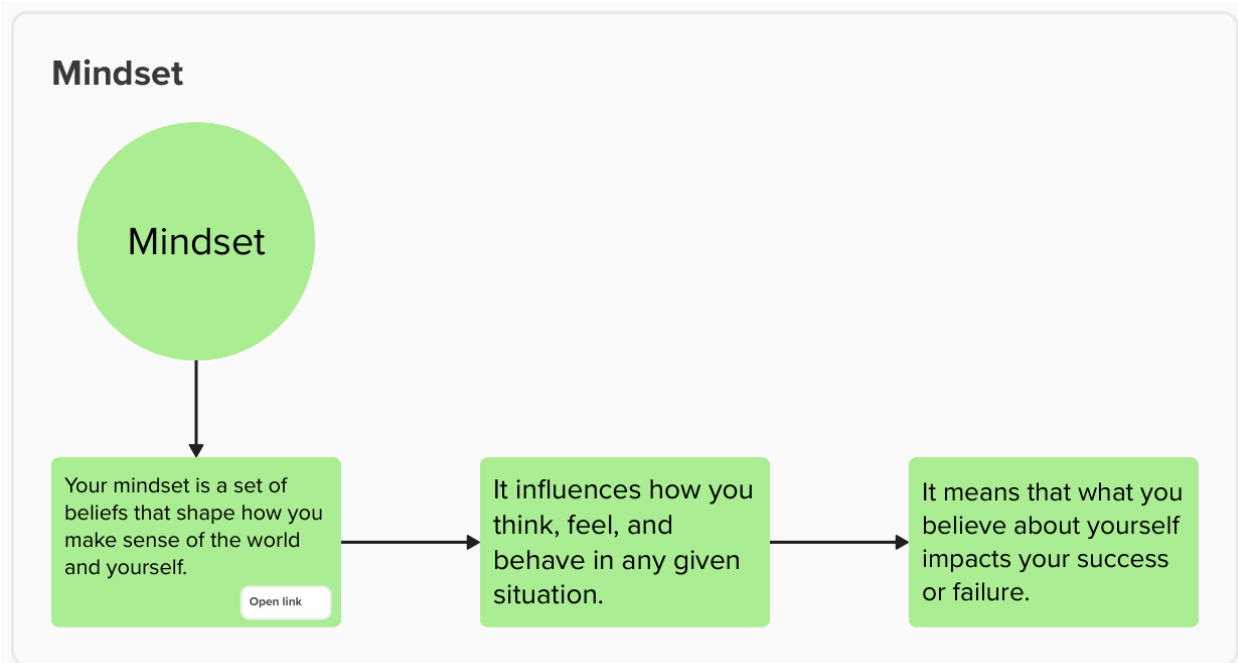
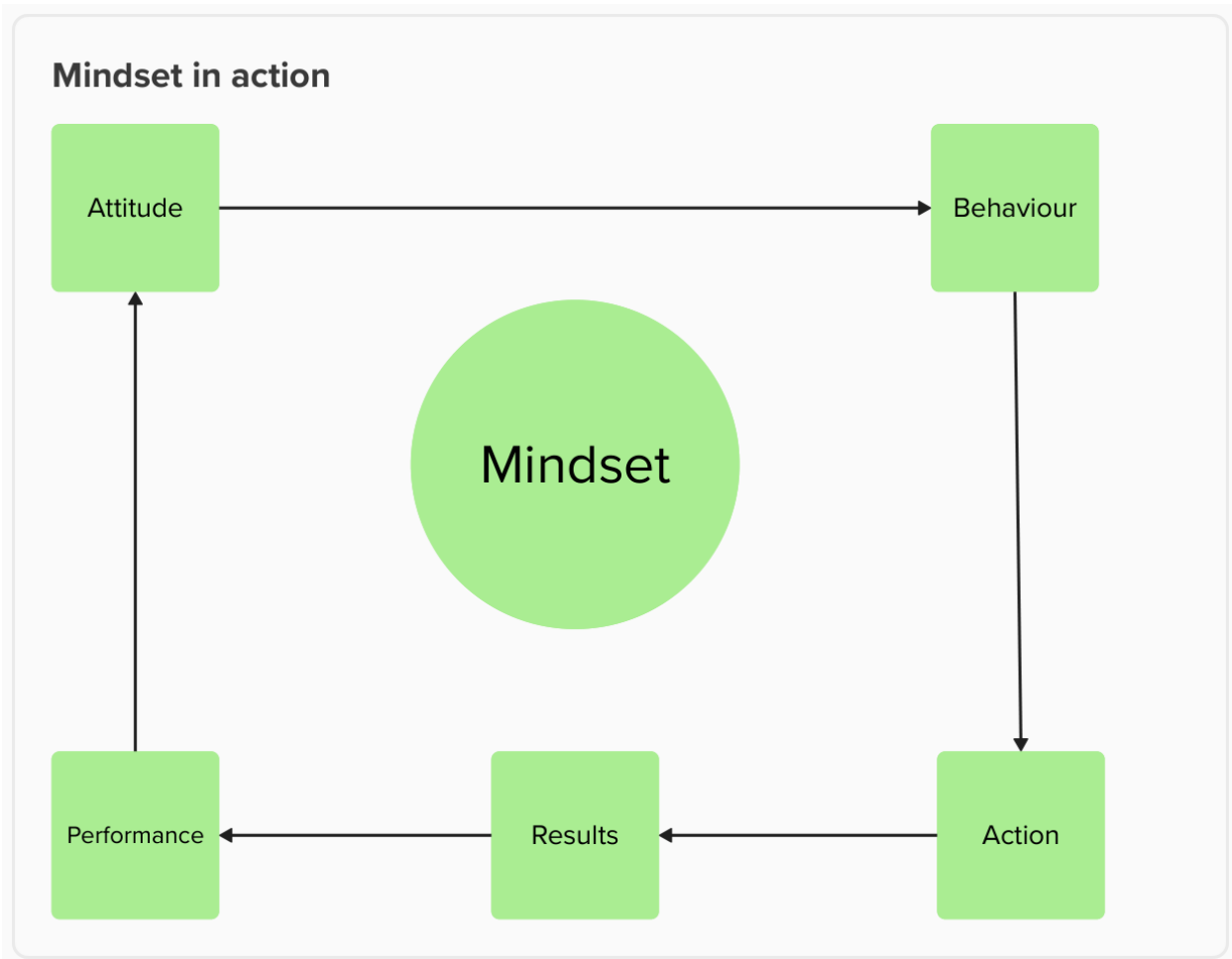


Figure 2

Schematic overview of the dynamics of mindset



Fixed Versus Growth Mindset

The scope of this paper is the creative mindset in an organizational context. The contemporary business world is characterized by fast-paced developments in technology. This requires an adaptable and growth mindset from employees. The growth mindset, as promoted by Carol Dweck (2006), is crucial in fostering creativity. Embracing a growth mindset means viewing challenges as opportunities for growth and believing that abilities can be developed through dedication and effort. Dweck emphasizes that individuals with a growth mindset are more likely to persevere in the face of obstacles, experiment with new ideas, and embrace failure as a steppingstone to success. By cultivating a growth mindset, individuals unlock their creative potential and approach tasks with resilience and curiosity, ultimately leading to greater innovation and breakthroughs (Dweck, 2006). A list of characteristics is attributed to both the fixed and growth mindset (Appendix A).

The Creative Mindset Mind Map

In order to get a better understanding of what the creative mindset means, in the context of this paper a mind map was made using Mural (Appendix B). It includes an overview of relevant concepts related to the creative mindset. More specifically in the context of organizational creativity.

The Best Practices of the Creative Mind, Skill & Toolset for Employees

The creative mind, skill and toolset is a fascinating subject which can be studied from many angles and in a variety of contexts. In this paper creativity is researched in the context of a professional organization, within the last 5 years. The result is an annotated bibliography, as seen

in Appendix C. When conducting research, recent major global events that made an impact on research and challenged our thinking cannot be ignored. In the research period, two major and global events - relevant for organizational creativity - created a lasting worldwide impact. The first one being the classification of COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The second event is the launch of commercial artificial intelligence (AI) for the masses such as Chat GPT on November 30, 2022. To make a relatively extended period better to comprehend in the literature research I made a distinction between literature from the pre Covid-19 period and the post Covid-19 period. I also made a distinction between the pre-launch literature of commercial AI and literature from the post-Chat GPT period. The two events mentioned had and still have a huge press effect. The events have an influence on how we understand what it means to be creative and consequently on the creative mind, skill and toolset.

COVID-19 Era: The Creative Mindset

Pre COVID-19

In this era organizations were already familiar with the concept of the creative mindset. Publications from the vast body of academic research in this period emphasized embracing paradoxical thinking to foster innovative work behavior, suggesting strategies like recruiting individuals with a paradox mindset and promoting job autonomy (Helzer & Kim, 2019; Liu et al., 2019; Ramnarayan & Shankar, 2020). The notion of workplace creativity being vital, not only for generating novel ideas but also promoting well-being through flexible stress responses is proposed. There is an emerging emphasize on self-efficacy and growth mindset to drive

innovation capacities crucial for organizational performance amid rapid technological development.

During COVID-19

An interesting shift occurs when the world is dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact is so severe it marked the beginning of a new paradigm. In this period the creative mindset of employees is put to the test like never before. Organizations faced unprecedented challenges that demanded even greater emphasis on creativity and adaptability. Best practices involve encouraging a creative mindset through active management of energy and mindfulness, as suggested by Kamp (2022). They also involve recognizing creativity's ability to heal and cope during crises, as emphasized by Tang et al. (2021). Moreover, these practices entail supporting remote work and virtual collaboration, fostering a culture of experimentation and embracing risk and giving priority to employee well-being through initiatives like flexible work schedules and mental health support. A research study by Du et al. (2021) concluded that the COVID-19 epidemic's psychological impact correlated with emotional creativity, suggesting that higher negative event exposure led to increased emotional creativity scores, possibly indicating adaptive emotional responses toward self-awareness. This challenging period showed that humanity can be creative when dealing with constraints.

Post COVID-19

On May 5, 2023, the head of the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) declared an end to COVID-19 as a public health emergency. The aftermath of this period again marks an interesting transition in literature. The concept of the volatile, uncertain, complex and

ambiguous world (VUCA) has been rooted in our collective consciousness for a long time (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). However, there is a realization that uncertainty may be the norm rather than the exception. The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the business landscape, a new normal, compelling organizations to prioritize resilience and adaptability. Scholars and researchers advocate for innovative human resource management strategies to re-engage employees, motivate remote workers, and foster empowerment. Employees must embrace skill development, continuous learning, and technological proficiency to thrive in the evolving job market. Employers must stay vigilant of megatrends like pandemic impacts and automation to prepare for an unpredictable future of work (Ng & Stanton, 2023).

COVID-19 Era: The Creative Skillset & Toolset

Pre COVID-19

Academic research in the pre-COVID-19 world highlighted the multifaceted nature of creativity and the complex interplay of individual, organizational, and environmental factors that contribute to fostering creative skills among employees. (Kremer et al., 2019; Short & Keller-Bell, 2019; Tang et al., 2020). Innovation is not merely a luxury but a necessity. Firms that effectively utilize the creativity of their workforce to translate ideas into novel products and services gain a significant edge over competitors. Research highlights the crucial role of employee voice and knowledge sharing in fostering creativity and innovation, providing substantial empirical evidence (Tang et al., 2020). However, despite its importance, leaders often fail to promote the employee behaviors essential for fostering innovation.

During COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic academic journals and renowned companies start to realize that the way organizational creativity was conducted prior to the pandemic could no longer be utilized. Upskilling is required for the workforce to thrive and come back stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic (Agrawal et al., 2020). A study examined how creativity serves as an unacknowledged driving force for organizational and employee development in both private and public sectors (Bousinakis & Halkos, 2021). One of the key findings is that creativity reduces stress, promotes success, and maintains high satisfaction levels. Factors like job engagement, workload, innovation and overtime influence stress, while creativity and skill use drive satisfaction.

Post COVID-19

As we transition to the post-COVID-19 era, organizations must continue to prioritize creativity and innovation to thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape. Key practices include leveraging lessons learned during the pandemic to inform future strategies, maintaining a flexible and adaptive mindset, investing in digital transformation and technology adoption, fostering a culture of continuous learning and experimentation, and prioritizing employee engagement and well-being to sustain long-term success. (Enstroem & Schmaltz, 2023; Ng & Stanton, 2023; Tan et al., 2023).

Commercial AI Era: The Creative Mindset

In contrast to the COVID-19 era, the commercial launch of large language models like ChatGPT did not have a definitive, officially announced conclusion akin to the end of the pandemic. Instead, it represents an ongoing process of development and refinement.

Pre-Commercial AI

Research explores the impact of AI on employment and societal structures, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It emphasizes the necessity of developing a growth mindset to navigate such disruptions effectively. The study by Farrow (2020) employed a scenario-based method, integrating Dweck's (2016) theories on fixed and growth mindsets. Findings suggest that a growth mindset fosters positive responses to change, facilitating adaptive capacity and problem-solving. Participants in a growth mindset displayed compassion, resilience, and a focus on collective well-being, while those in a fixed mindset experienced fear and loss. The research underscores the importance of fostering a sustainable growth mindset beyond workshop settings to address societal impacts and promote positive change. It advocates for creating safe environments for open dialogue and collaboration, emphasizing the need for creative problem-solving to shape future structures in alignment with societal and environmental needs. In this era, organizations are already affected by automation and AI. There is a realization that a sustainable future lies in the collaboration between technology and employees with higher cognitive skills such as creative problem solving and adaptability (Horstmeyer, 2019).

During Commercial AI and Beyond

In this era, great emphasis is put on the relation between AI and emotional intelligence. According Nandan et al. (2023) “In summary, we must strike a balance between the advancements of artificial intelligence and the importance of emotional intelligence. As we continue to integrate AI into our daily lives, we must ensure that we don't lose sight of the importance of human connection and empathy. Ultimately, the most successful individuals and organizations will be those that can control the benefits of both artificial intelligence and emotional intelligence to achieve their goals.” In one study (Indrasari & Pamuji, 2023) organizations must enhance collaboration between humans and technology to boost employee performance. This research proposes strategic approaches for thriving in AI-integrated workplaces, emphasizing tailored initiatives like continuous learning and AI-conscious leadership. By integrating AI strategically and fostering a growth-oriented organizational culture, businesses can optimize employee performance and stay innovative in the AI era. Unlocking the creative performance of employees is essential for driving innovation in the contemporary VUCA world. Companies can achieve this by implementing AI to reduce employees' workload (Rožman et al., 2023). AI enables organizations to develop cutting-edge products and services, adapt to market demands with agility and provide personalized training experiences for employees. Moreover, AI-driven analytics in marketing offer deep insights into customer behavior, inspiring creative strategies to engage with audiences effectively. By reducing employee workload and empowering individuals to contribute to the company's performance, AI plays a pivotal role in nurturing a creative mindset within organizations.

Commercial AI Era: The Creative Skillset & Toolset

Pre-Commercial AI

In this era generative artificial intelligence (GAI) is not accessible for customers and employees yet. These technologies are promising and frequently discussed in the literature. The optimal benefits of these technologies, although technological advancements are already transforming the workplace, will be realized only in collaboration with human capital. In particular, as certain manual and technical skills are replaced by automation, the jobs that remain will require more highly developed social and cognitive skills such as creative problem-solving, interpersonal skills, empathy, and adaptability, and continuous learning (Jaiswal et al., 2021). AI's impact on creative processes is significant and will reshape future work dynamics. As a result, traditional models of creativity need adaptation to include AI's role in supporting people, process and product (Siemon et al., 2022). At the other side of the spectrum fear rises about job displacement by robots in the context of Industry 4.0 (Liao et al., 2018). However, to harness the potential of Industry 4.0, a human-centric approach is paramount. Effective workforce transition demands innovation, with emphasis on skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and teamwork—key drivers of innovation (Rampersad, 2020).

During Commercial AI and Beyond

In this period generative AI applications such as Chat GPT are commercially available for consumers. The question is explored how AI can contribute to boosting employee creativity. The potential of AI-human collaboration in enhancing creativity within organizations is investigated. In an ideal scenario AI handles routine tasks, freeing up employees to focus on more complex problem-solving. This hypothesis was tested in a comprehensive study (Jia et al., 2023). The findings, based on both quantitative and qualitative research, reveal that AI assistance in sales lead generation positively impacts employee creativity in subsequent customer interactions, leading to increased sales. However, this effect is more pronounced among higher-skilled employees. Qualitative interviews further illustrate how AI reshapes job roles, intensifying interactions with serious customers and facilitating creativity among skilled employees. Conversely, lower-skilled employees show limited improvements and experience negative emotions with AI assistance. While AI can enhance creativity, its effectiveness is influenced by employees' skill levels, favoring those with greater expertise. In the evolving job market, psychological adaptability will be crucial, with critical thinking emerging as a fundamental skill. The rapid advancements in technology, including AI, necessitate a shift in educational focus towards developing critical thinking abilities. Future professionals will need to go beyond their specific roles, embodying critical thinking across various fields (Dumitru & Halpern, 2023).

The Process of Selecting one Aspect of Employee Creativity

The decision to prioritize the creative mindset over the creative skillset and toolset stems from an understanding of its foundational role in driving innovation and problem-solving. By focusing on cultivating a creative mindset, one can develop the ability to approach challenges with adaptability, curiosity, and resilience. Moreover, recognizing the importance of synergy between all aspects of the creative mind, skill, and toolset emphasizes the holistic nature of creativity. It emphasizes the need for alignment and integration between mindset, skills, and tools to unleash one's full creative potential and achieve impactful outcomes in various endeavors.

Synthesis of the Contemporary Landscape & Future Forecasting

The contemporary landscape of organizational creativity is a complex phenomenon containing many factors. Terms like the conceptual age, coined by, and the fourth industrial revolution, referred to as industry 4.0. According to Coberly-Holt and Elufiede (2019) to thrive in Industry 4.0, individuals must develop new ways of thinking and develop higher-order thinking skills, encompassing both creativity and the ability to think critically. This requires a new mindset. Self-actualization stems from a belief in the power of intrinsic motivation and self-awareness as potent driving forces. According to Op den Kamp et. al (2022) traditional methods were aimed at stimulating creativity top-down. Similar to health, it may be beneficial for employees to feel empowered to take charge of and manage their unique creative abilities and lead themselves toward desired outcomes. In an increasingly automated world, employers need employees which inhibits soft skills such as creativity, empathy, and critical thinking (McKinsey Quarterly, 2020). According to Degraff (2020), companies invest significant resources each year

aiming to encourage innovation within their employees. Yet, what often escapes notice is the vital role that individual creativity plays in propelling innovation forward. The area that many leaders tend to overlook in the realm of innovation is the meeting point between the individual and the corporation. A corporation reaches its peak of creativity when its workforce discovers personal inspiration derived from their own lives. This may imply that there is a more holistic interaction required between employers and employees. According to Degraff (2020) “We need to understand creativity as a force that doesn’t exist in a single fixed place like an office, boardroom, or workshop but one that pervades all aspects of our everyday lives. Innovation is about doing the creative work the company can’t. All we need is a creative mindset and some basic creativity skills.” (p.11). This may also imply that employers need to exhibit a more leader-oriented role in their company. For clarity, the framework of the 4 P’s is used (Rhodes, 1961). This framework provides a structured approach to classify the common themes of organizational creativity of the last five years. Contrary to the best practices based on academic literature, discussed earlier the scope of this synthesis is informal media sources. In each of the 4 P’s the most frequently mentioned and common themes are categorized in all relevant elements (P’s) of organizational creativity.

The Creative Person

In the recent past creativity was more focused on benefits and economical outcomes for the organization. Individual traits and characteristics that contribute to creativity in the workplace are held in high regard. Creativity as a skill is not something that is limited to office space and brainstorming meetings. Employers are starting to see the value of personal creativity and diversity that goes beyond the professional context of the organization. Creative behavior, if

stimulated top-down, was a set of formal tasks. Now creativity is expected to come from the employees and are expected to upskill so they can adapt to a world where instability may be the norm. Soft skills such as critical thinking, creative thinking and empathy are becoming more important. The sophisticated, most creative employees will remain one of the most valuable assets for companies.

The Creative Process

The digitalization and automation of the workforce continues. The implementation of AI promises to amplify human creativity instead of threatening it. On the other hand, employees need to adjust to a world that will never be the same prior to COVID-10. Employees who have the right combination of hard and soft skills and know how to leverage AI in work processes will outperform the rest.

The Creative Product

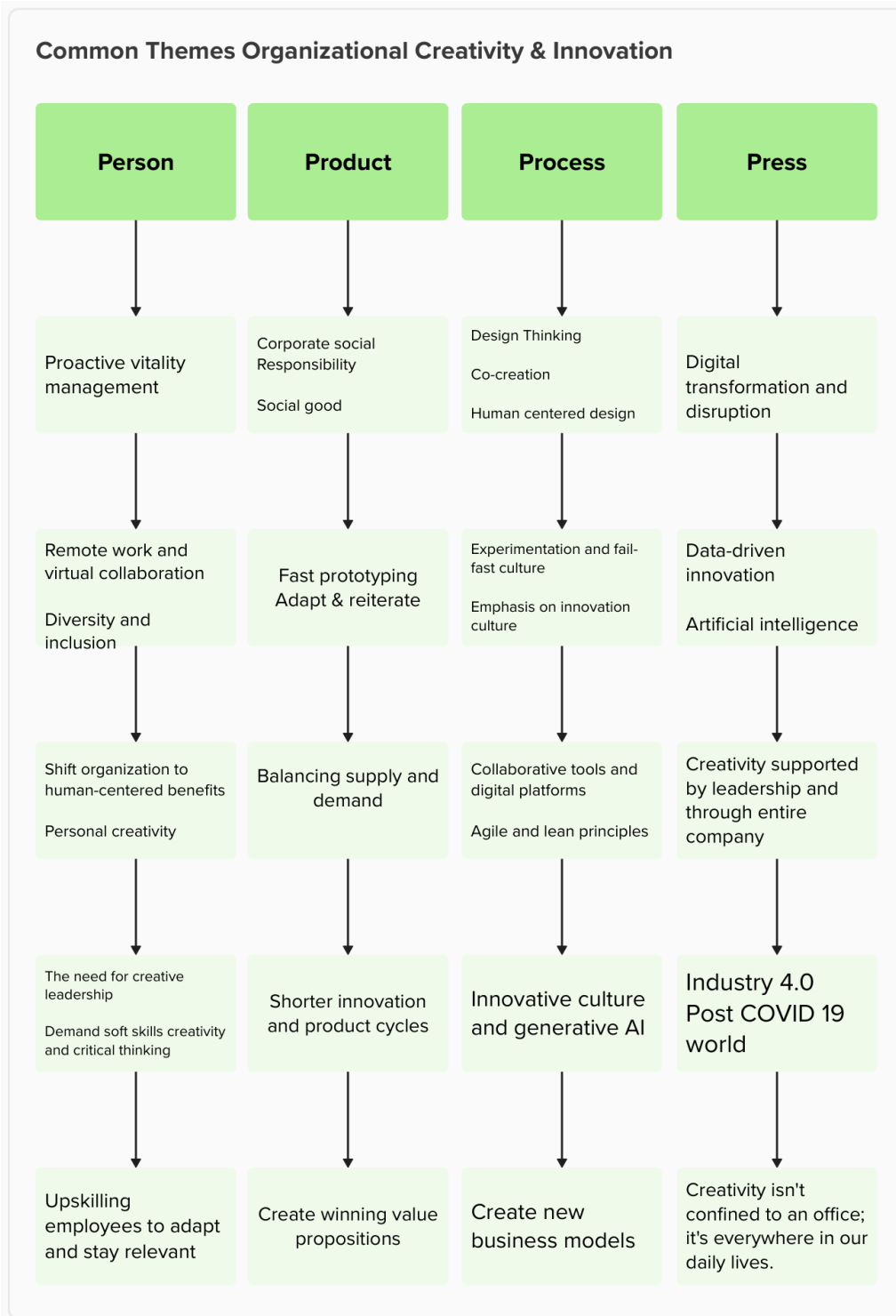
Employees are expected to have a flexible and creative mindset to better cope with the speed of change in technology and the unstable world at large. Corporate social responsibility in all facets is important when launching products and services. This product is particularly valuable in the current landscape due to its ability to offer innovative solutions to pressing challenges, fostering adaptability and resilience within organizations. Furthermore, in an era where disruption is the norm, having such a versatile product equips businesses with the tools needed to stay ahead of the curve and maintain relevance in an ever-changing environment.

The Creative Press

The concept of the VUCA world is frequently discussed in informal media outlets, with a particular focus on increased automation and AI. These factors influence various aspects such as organizational creativity, market competition, product lifecycles, and industry dynamics. Additionally, technology-related themes including globalization, the technology S-curve, digitalization, automation, and artificial intelligence are prominent topics. The discussion also encompasses the impact of social, cultural, and economic trends on organizational creativity and corporate social responsibility, along with strategies for managing uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk in creative pursuits. As illustrated in Figure 3, providing an overview of all the common themes regarding organizational creativity and innovation.

Figure 3

Common Themes Organizational Creativity and Innovation



Informal Discussions with Industry Professionals

To gain a more realistic understanding of the challenges surrounding organizational creativity, discussions were conducted with industry experts. Prior to the conversations, I discussed how the information shared would be used for themes, not to discuss individual companies or employees. The objective was to gain insight into the emotions and challenges faced by employees in relation to organizational creativity, and consequently, the development of a creative mindset, skillset, and toolset. I introduced myself, described the 4 P's model of creativity and asked some questions of individuals related to organizational creativity. Several common themes emerged from the discussions regarding organizational creativity.

Culture of Innovation

All the organizational employees I had discussions with stressed the importance of fostering a culture that encourages creativity and innovation within the organization. This includes creating an environment where employees feel empowered to express their ideas without fear of judgment or repercussion.

Adaptability and Change

Creativity is seen as essential for organizations to adapt to changes in the industry and seize new opportunities. Being open to change and willing to experiment with new ideas are crucial aspects of fostering creativity and innovation.

Training and Development

While some companies provide training and resources to stimulate creative performance, there is a consensus that more systematic approaches are needed. Practical tools, real-life case studies, and ongoing training programs are seen as essential for nurturing creative talent and supporting innovation.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is highlighted as a key factor in promoting creativity within teams. A diverse range of perspectives and experiences can lead to more innovative ideas and solutions. Additionally, creating a safe environment where employees feel comfortable sharing their failures and learning from them is essential for fostering creativity.

Leadership and Organizational Support

Leadership plays a critical role in fostering creativity within organizations. Leaders should promote a culture of creativity and innovation, provide support and resources for creative endeavors, and be willing to take risks and embrace failure as part of the innovation process.

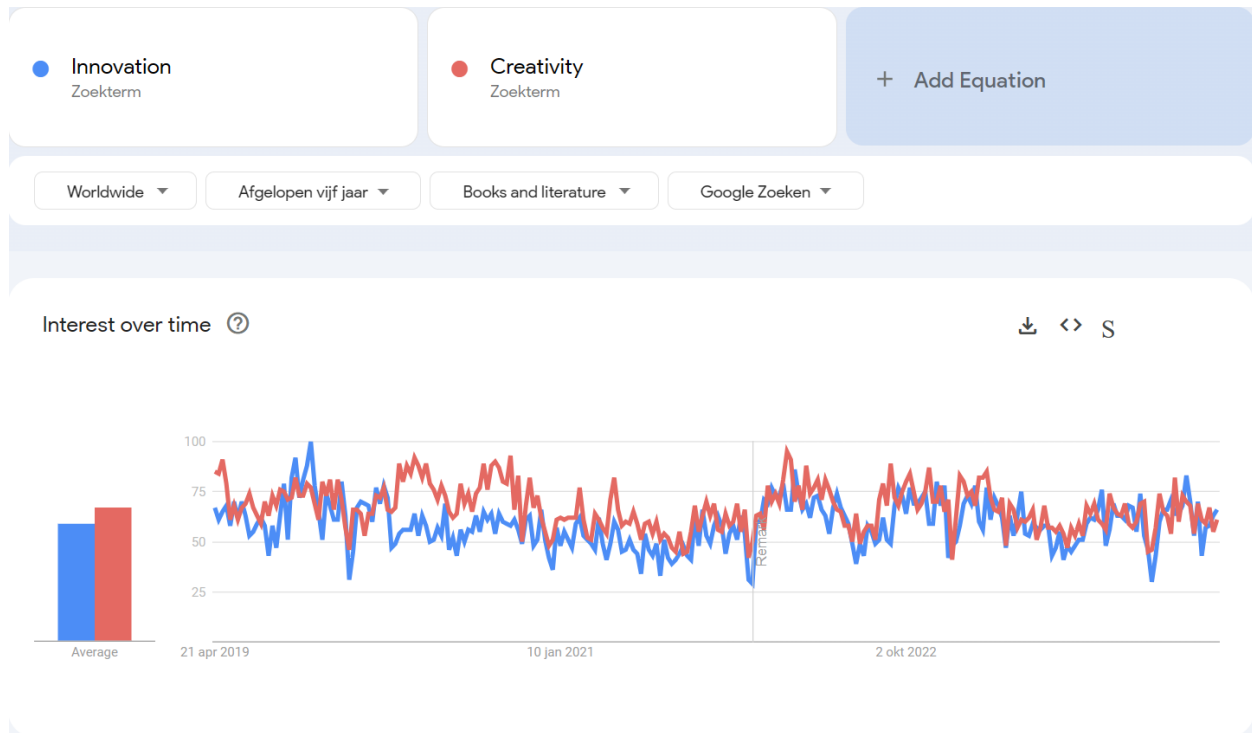
Based on these insights, organizations need to prioritize the development of a creative mindset, skillset, and toolset to thrive in the contemporary business world. By fostering a culture of innovation, providing training and support for creative endeavors, embracing diversity and inclusion, and providing strong leadership and organizational support, companies can unleash the full creative potential of their employees and drive meaningful change and growth.

The Identification of the gap between demand and supply

As indicated earlier, there is a consistent and growing trend in both formal and informal literature emphasizing the importance of creative thinking as one of the most important skills in the world. This indicates that there is a rising demand for the skill of creative thinking. When analyzing global trends in Google queries, in the period 2019-2024 it is evident that interest in creativity and innovation within the books and literature category is approximately equal. Figure 4 shows comparative search queries for creativity and innovation. The shown data is based on the last five years in the category of books and literature worldwide.

Figure 4

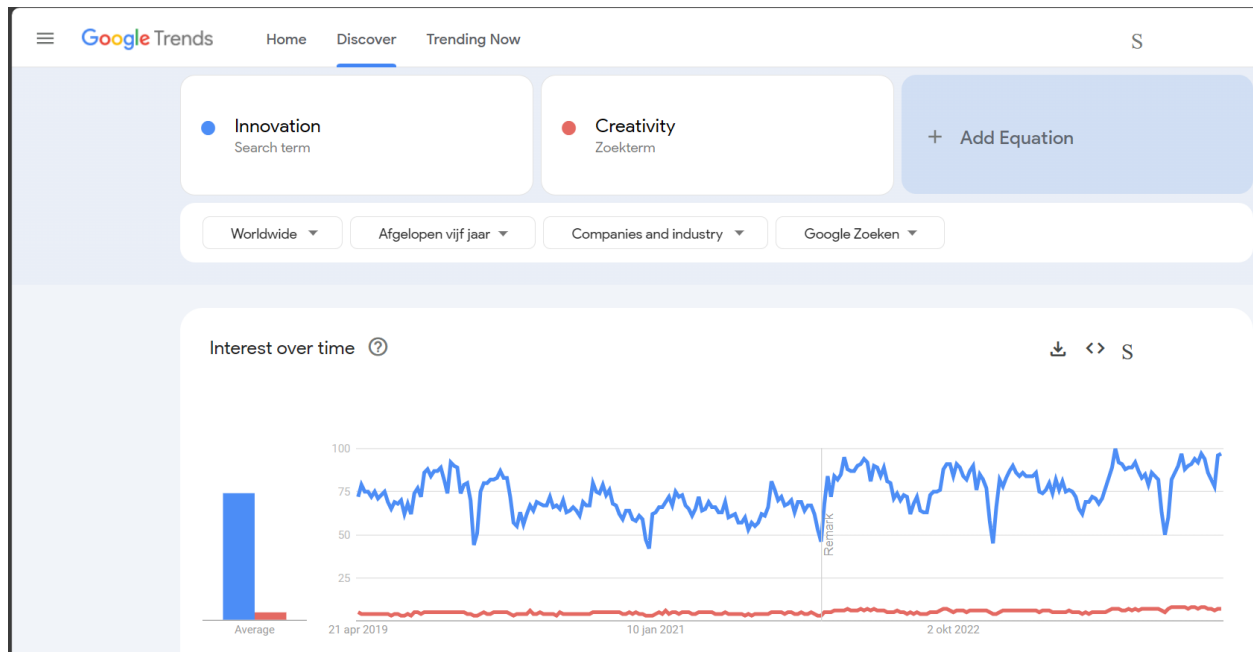
Google trends: Comparative search queries for creativity and innovation



A comparison has been made regarding search queries in the category companies and industry. When analyzing global trends in Google searches, in the same period it is evident that interest in creativity and innovation within this category shows major differences. Figure 5 shows comparative search queries for innovation and creativity. The shown data is based on the last five years in the category of companies and industry worldwide. Insights on innovation and creativity search queries for specific countries are available, in Appendix D.

Figure 5

Google trends: Comparative search queries for innovation and creativity.

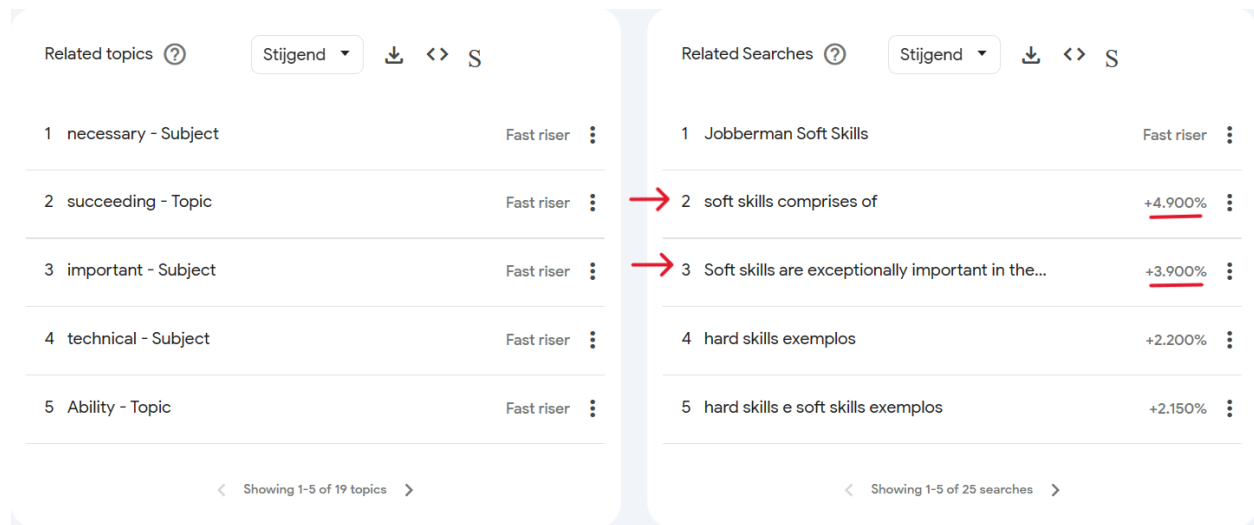


A thorough analysis is required to understand what this data indicates. Initially, it suggests that companies and industries, or individuals interested in this category prioritize innovation that delivers tangible results.

Formal and informal literature has common themes which put emphasis on the importance of an adaptable mindset. A growing trend of upskilling, and the demand for soft skills is also observed. Figure 6 shows fast rising queries related to soft skills. The shown data is based on the last five years in the category of companies and industry worldwide.

Figure 6

Google data: fast rising queries related to soft skills

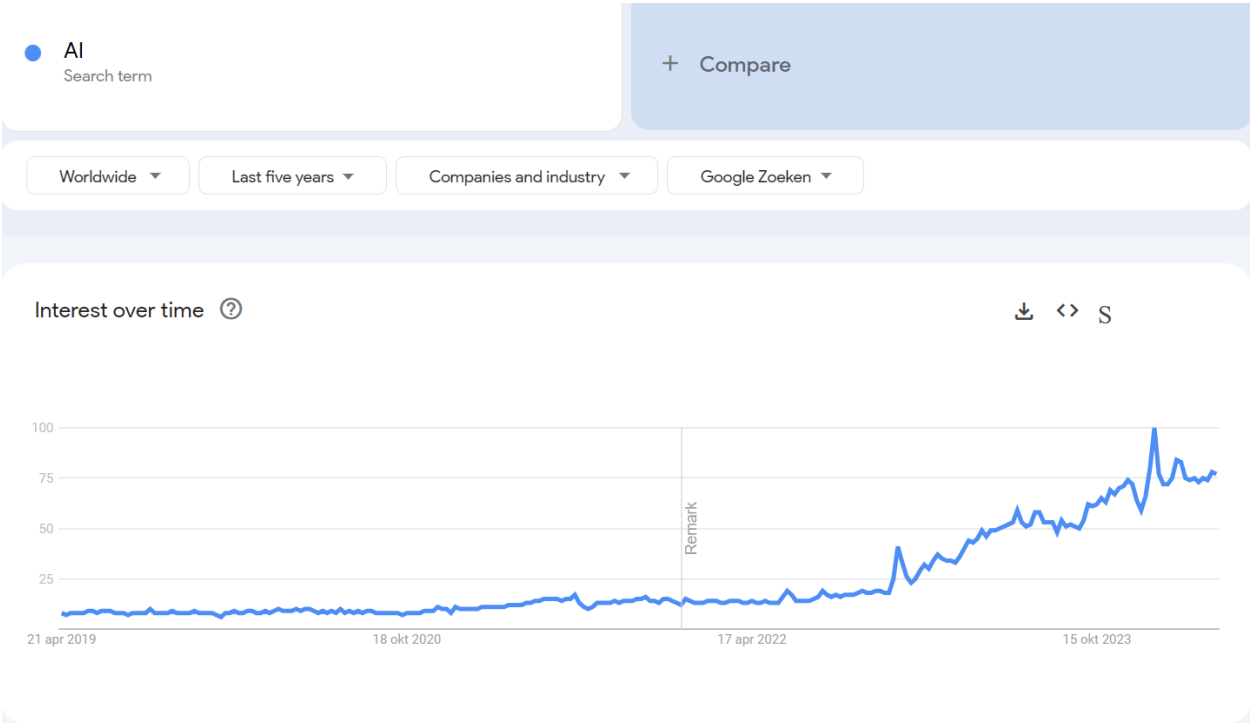


The contemporary business world is implementing AI. Harnessing the power of AI offers organizations a multitude of benefits. Firstly, it significantly boosts efficiency by automating repetitive tasks, freeing up valuable time for employees to focus on strategic initiatives. This, in turn, leads to enhanced decision-making capabilities, as AI can analyze vast amounts of data quickly and accurately. Moreover, AI implementation results in cost reduction through decreased reliance on manual labor. Additionally, organizations can elevate their customer experience by employing AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants, providing round-the-clock support and personalized interactions. Predictive analytics capabilities enable businesses to anticipate market changes, while risk mitigation measures are bolstered through AI's real-time threat detection capabilities. Quality assurance is also improved, as AI algorithms monitor and detect anomalies, ensuring adherence to quality standards. Furthermore, AI fosters innovation by generating data-driven insights that drive the development of new products, services, and business models. Ultimately, organizations leveraging AI gain a significant competitive advantage by staying

ahead of technological advancements and market trends. Figure 7 shows the interest over time in AI. The shown data is based on the last five years in the category of companies and industry worldwide.

Figure 7

Google trends: interest over time in AI



The Platform Prototype CreaConnect

As indicated earlier in this paper, one of the most valuable assets for companies to thrive in the long run will be the most creative employees, equipped with critical thinking abilities and able to leverage the opportunities of AI. There is a growing demand from companies for such professionals. (The future of Jobs Report 2023, n.d.) On the supply side there are plenty of professional practitioners who offer services in the domain of organizational creativity. These creative professionals are partially organized under professional associations. This leads to the insight that it would be very beneficial for the demand and supply of creativity to be united in a global marketplace. Currently, I am developing an online platform which provides access to a vast global marketplace, connecting creative practitioners and organizations from around the world. It offers a diverse range of services and products across various categories, catering to the needs of businesses in different industries.

Description of CreaConnect

CreaConnect is an innovative platform designed to seamlessly connect the supply of the creative community (X) with the demand from organizations, employers and employees (Y), leveraging digitization and artificial intelligence (AI) to optimize connections and create value for both parties.

How CreaConnect Works

Users register on the platform and create detailed profiles outlining their offerings (supply X) or needs (demand Y), including specifications, preferences, and location. This

process leverages increased digitization by allowing users to input and manage their information digitally, streamlining the registration process.

Advanced Matching Algorithm

CreaConnect utilizes a sophisticated AI-driven matching algorithm that analyzes user profiles, historical data, and real-time trends to identify highly compatible matches between supply X and demand Y. This AI-driven matching algorithm optimizes the matching process, ensuring efficient and accurate connections between users.

Seamless Communication and Collaboration Tools

The platform provides seamless communication and collaboration tools, including instant messaging, video conferencing, and file sharing, to facilitate efficient interactions and negotiations between users. These digital tools enhance communication and collaboration, allowing users to connect and engage with each other effortlessly.

Value Creation for Supply X and Demand Y

CreaConnect aims to create value for both the supply of creative professional and the demand from organizations by concentrating on the creative person, process, product and press also known as the 4 Ps of creativity as referred to earlier in this paper.

Person

Supply X: Suppliers gain access to a wider audience, expanding their market reach and opportunities for growth. Demand Y: Users with demand gain access to diverse solutions, enabling them to find the best-fit solutions to meet their specific needs.

Process

Supply X: Streamlined processes and efficient resource allocation lead to cost savings and improved productivity. Demand Y: Simplified search and procurement processes save time and effort, improving overall efficiency.

Product

Supply X: Enhanced visibility and access to market insights empower suppliers to innovate and customize products/services. Demand Y: Personalized recommendations and customized experiences improve user satisfaction and engagement.

Press

Supply X: Increased market visibility and positive customer interactions enhance brand reputation and credibility. Demand Y: Access to diverse solutions and collaboration opportunities fosters innovation and industry recognition.

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

My key insight revolves around recognizing my role as a creative change leader. Constant clarification was essential to ensure I addressed the right problems while avoiding bias and premature conclusions. When ideating, I reminded myself not to quickly fall in love with my initial ideas but to defer judgment and prioritize thorough research. While not naturally a developer, this master's project synthesized all my accumulated knowledge and experience, prompting me to recall and patiently apply development tools and strategies. As an ideator, I found it challenging not to rush into implementation. Learning to acknowledge my limitations and embrace diverse perspectives became crucial. Confronting the influence of past education, which emphasized conformity and perfection, I discovered the value of surrendering to creative tension for self-reflection. Despite having a clear vision from the outset, translating it into tangible outcomes proved challenging. Feedback sessions with my soundboard partner, Elien, as well as with family and friends, proved invaluable. Regular sessions with Dr. Sue Keller Mathers provided additional perspectives, fueling both inspiration and hard work. Creativity thrives on diversity, and I realized that defining the project scope is akin to navigating a vast galaxy within the universe of creativity. Translating accumulated knowledge and experiences into a tangible value proposition was immensely rewarding.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, creativity stands as a cornerstone of human evolution and problem-solving throughout history. As a higher order thinking skill, its significance remains paramount, especially in today's complex world. Despite shifting paradigms and global events, the essence of creativity persists offering novel perspectives to tackle challenges. Over the last five years, marked by significant global shifts, we have witnessed a growing consciousness around our creative potential. This awareness is a testament to our evolving relationship with creativity, once frowned upon but now embraced as essential. Moving forward, future trends and global dynamics will further shape our understanding of creativity, reinforcing its indispensable role in human advancement. As we navigate this continuum of human evolution, it is imperative to recognize and harness the transformative power of creativity in shaping a more innovative and resilient future. During this master's project, I have developed a compelling vision. Now it is my responsibility as a creative change leader to serve and create value for the creative community and the world.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

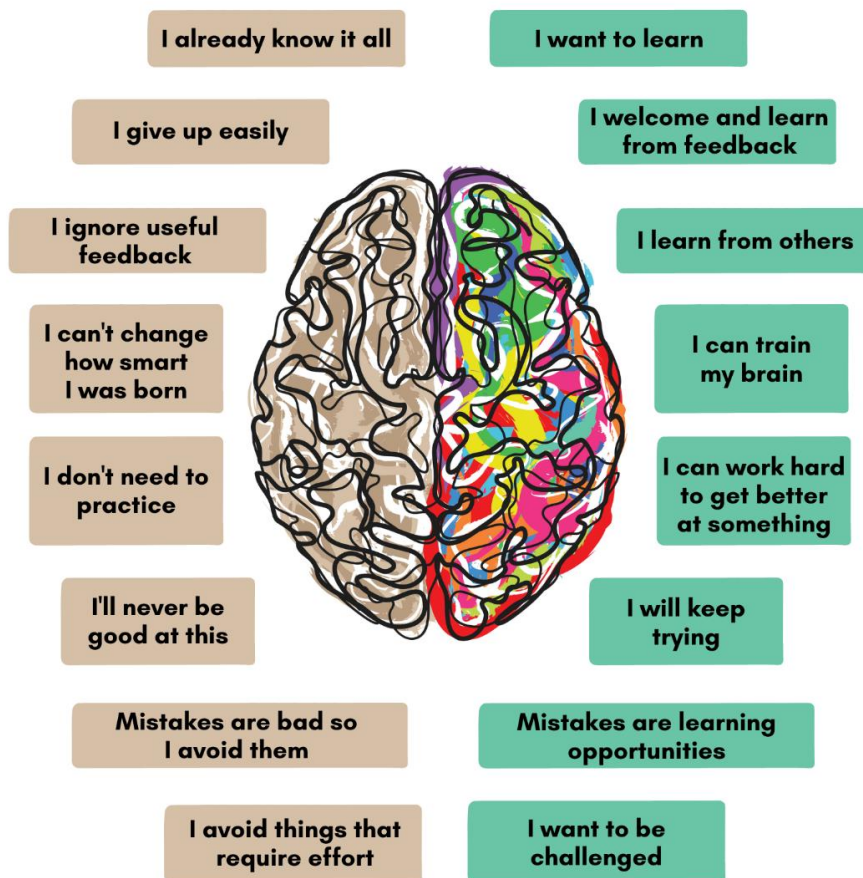
The Fixed versus the Growth Mindset

GROWTH MINDSET

The driver behind a learner's motivation and achievement

FIXED MINDSET

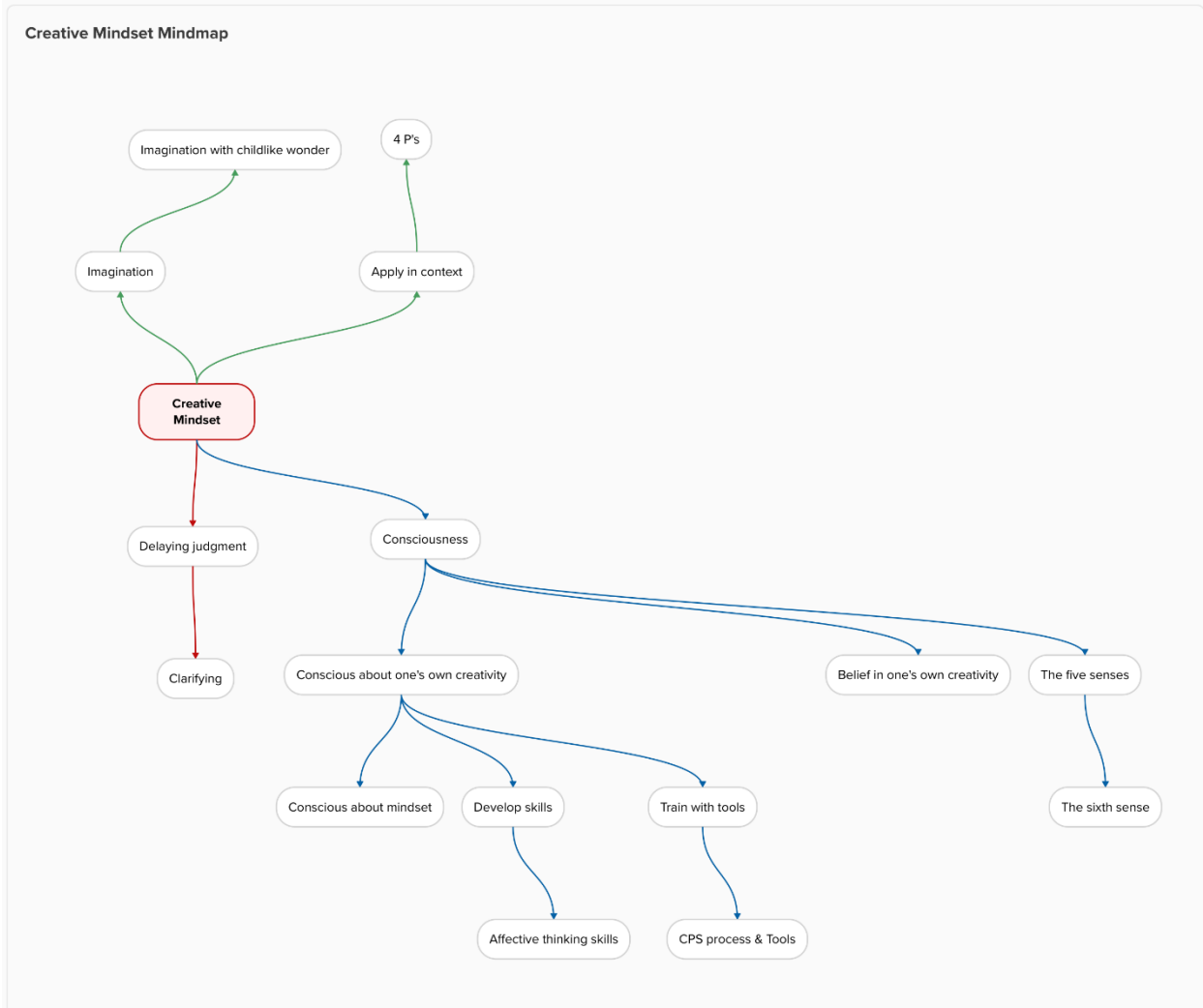
GROWTH MINDSET



Education Resource Hub (Rainbow Growth Mindset Poster, n.d.)

Appendix B

The Mindset Mind Map



(Buzan & Buzan, 2003)

Appendix C

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MAJOR GLOBAL EVENT 2: COMMERCIAL LAUNCH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Creative Mindset

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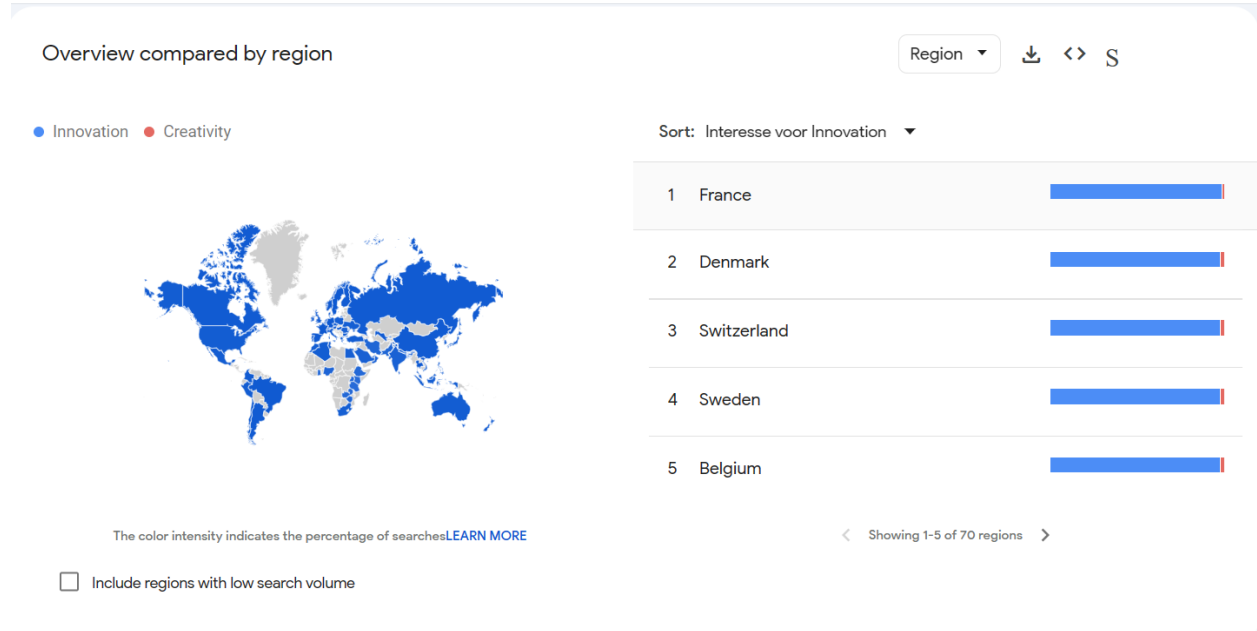
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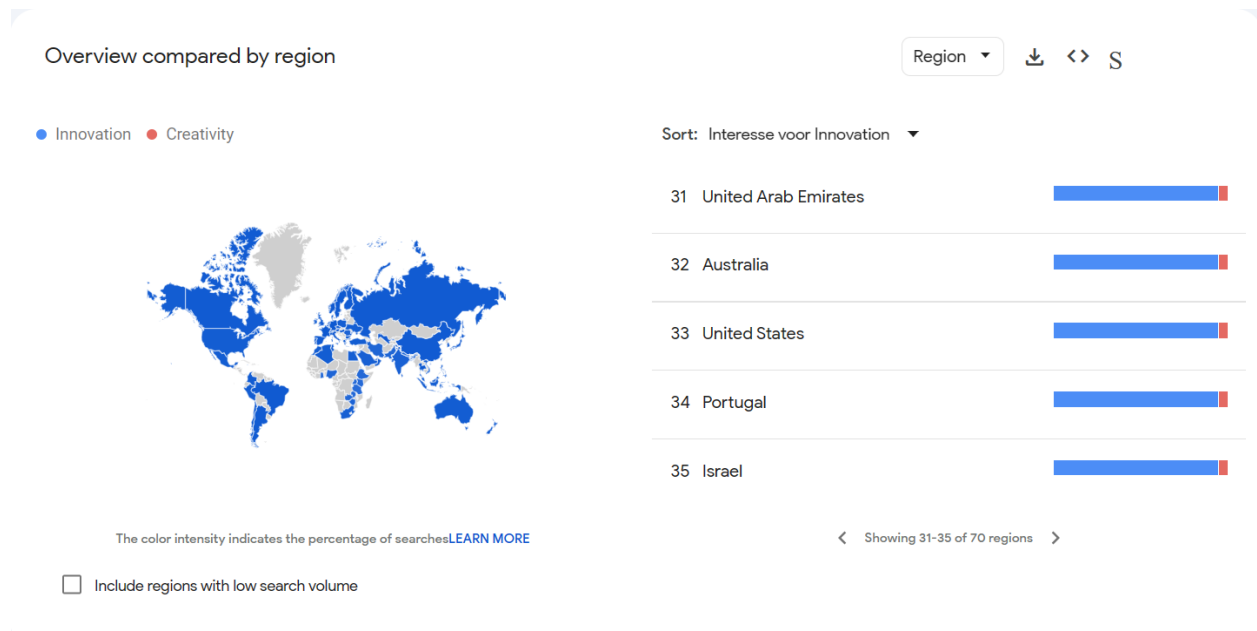
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Appendix D

Google trends: creativity vs innovation



Google (2024a).



(Google, 2024b).

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I hereby grant permission to the Department of Creativity and Change Leadership, Center for Applied Imagination at Buffalo State University permission to place a digital copy of this master's Project: *Thriving in the Contemporary Business World: How to Empower Employees with the Creative Mindset, Skillset and Toolset* as an online resource.



Ardjan Robbé Groskamp

2024-05-07

Date