CHAPTER 1

# The Resistance to New Ideas



*The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones.*

—John Maynard Keynes, economist

Many critics rendered harsh judgment when 40-year-old Édouard Manet displayed his rather shocking painting *Le Bain* at an exhibition in Paris on May 15, 1863. Critics responded:

- Its garish colouring pierces the eyes like a steel saw; his figures seem to have been cut out with a punch and have a hardness that is capable of no soothing compromise. It has all the unpalatability of green fruits that will never ripen.[1]
- A young man's practical joke, a shameful open sore not worth exhibiting this way.[2]
- An absurd composition.[3]

Manet's controversial work featured a naked woman seated on the ground alongside two men fully clothed in stylish attire. The woman's blue dress and straw hat lay on the ground beside her, adjacent to a picnic basket and a loaf of bread. In the background, another woman bathes in a stream. Manet's work proved scandalous. He had not depicted a nude goddess in a scene from mythology, as many traditional painters

did, but rather an unclothed woman in a modern Parisian scene. Some suggested that the painting depicted prostitutes working in the Bois de Boulogne, a large public park on the western edge of Paris. The painting elicited derision and ridicule from those who attended the exhibition. One person wrote that Manet's work met with a "veritable clamor of condemnation."[4] Another critic observed that, "Never was such insane laughter better deserved."[5]

*Le Bain* (later retitled *Luncheon on the Grass*) elicited criticism not only due to the scandalous nature of the Parisian scene Manet depicted. It also challenged convention and tradition with its style; many considered Manet's approach quite radical and rather crude. He did not try to capture every detail with precision. Author Ross King wrote that, "[Manet] did not concern himself with realistically transcribing nature or ensuring the flesh tones of his subjects correctly matched their outdoor setting."[6] Instead, *Le Bain* appeared "sketch-like" and "roughly-painted."[7] Manet did not apply his paint in layers over the course of many weeks or even months, and he did not apply a glaze to the finished artwork. Instead, he pioneered the *alla prima* (at once) technique, using broad brushstrokes to paint a scene in one sitting. His work featured sharp contrasts of color rather than subtle transitions. The painting lacked proper perspective, too.[8] Many critics rejected this radical new style. Manet lacked the finesse to which they had become accustomed.

In 1863, many people regarded Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier as "the most renowned artist of our time."[9] Unlike Manet, Meissonier worked with great precision to depict scenes of 17th- and 18th-century life, as many other artists did at the time. His work evoked nostalgia for the past, depicting chivalrous gentlemen on horseback or men engaged in noble activities such as chess, music, painting, or reading. Meissonier also loved to depict famous scenes from Napoleon's military campaigns. He strove for historical accuracy and authenticity in every detail. Observers needed a magnifying glass to truly appreciate the minute details captured meticulously in each painting. Critics marveled at his physical dexterity. Meissonier amassed a considerable fortune and received great acclaim for his work. While Meissonier received praise, Manet once noted that, "Insults are pouring down on me as thick as hail."[10]

In that era, French artists aspired to display their work at the Exhibition of Living Artists that took place annually in the Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées. Commonly referred to as the Paris Salon, the exhibition attracted as many as one million citizens over a six-week period. Manet submitted *Le Bain* in 1863, hoping it would be chosen by the members of the jury for inclusion in that year's salon. Count Alfred Émilien O'Hara van Nieuwerkerke oversaw the selection process. He strove to preserve the highest possible standards for the salon. He favored the style of Meissonier, with its focus on history and idealism, and rejected the realism movement, with its embrace of ordinary life and people of all social classes. Commenting on these radical new artists, he said, "This is the painting of democrats, of men who don't change their underwear."[11]

Nieuwerkerke ruled that the jury should consist only of men who were members of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, an elite society of traditionalists intent on preserving the status quo. Approximately, 3,000 artists submitted more than 5,000 paintings for consideration in 1863. In mid-April, the jury announced its decisions. They had accepted only 2,217 paintings by 988 artists. The jury rejected *Le Bain* as well as two other paintings submitted by Manet. Other spurned artists included Gustave Courbet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Controversy swirled around the widespread rejections. Emperor Napoleon decided to intervene. Concerned about societal unrest and discontent, the emperor chose to embrace the idea of a separate exhibition consisting of the artwork rejected by the establishment. Soon this exhibition came to be known as the Salon des Refuses (exhibition of the rejects). More than 1,000 people per day attended, though many laughed at the rejected works of art. Manet submitted *Le Bain* for display, and mockery and ridicule ensued for him as well.

Amidst the deluge of criticism, a few astute observers noted the stark contrast between those accepted and rejected by the Paris Salon. They sensed that the ground had begun to shift. The famous journalist and art critic Théophile Thoré described it as a contrast between "conservatives and innovators, tradition and originality."[12] Amidst widespread

criticism, younger artists took comfort that others shared their willingness to experiment and break new ground. Manet became a leader among this new generation of painters. He met regularly with other innovators such as Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Renoir, and Pissarro at Café Guerbois in Paris. They argued and debated, and they shared ideas on Sundays and Thursdays, becoming known as the Batignolles Group.

Ten years after the original salon controversy, Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Degas, and others created the Société Anonyme Coopérative des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs (Cooperative and Anonymous Association of Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers). They chose not to submit their work to the Paris Salon. Instead, they formed an independent exhibition, which opened to mixed reviews. Monet submitted a painting titled, *Impression, Sunrise.* Critic Louis Leroy mocked the painting in an article titled, *The Exhibition of the Impressionists.* He wrote, "Impression—I was certain of it. I was just telling myself that, since I was impressed, there had to be some impression in it . . . and what freedom, what ease of workmanship! Wallpaper in its embryonic state is more finished than that seascape."[13] Others started referring to this group of renegade artists as the *impressionists*, and even the painters themselves adopted the name despite the fact that it had emerged from a scathing criticism of their work. We know how this story ends. Ultimately, Manet became known as the father of modernism, and the impressionist movement stands as one of the most consequential eras in art history.

The story of Manet and the impressionists should not surprise us. We have heard this type of story on many occasions. Today's experts reject tomorrow's creative geniuses. Conventional wisdom, preconceived notions, and cognitive biases blind the experts from recognizing the merits of bold new ideas. We trust experts and look to them for wise judgment, prescient forecasts, and sound leadership. Turn on the television, and you see a steady stream of pundits being called upon to weigh in on a variety of economic, political, and social issues. However, expertise may not translate into an ability to see the future, or to evaluate original, out-of-the-box ideas more effectively than you and I can. Experts should be flying aircraft, performing heart surgeries,

and designing bridges. We don't want a novice fixing our car or our broken hip. However, when it comes to creativity and innovation, expertise may be a liability at times. As Zen teacher Shunryu Suzuki once said, "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few."[14]

## Closed-Minded Experts

Alfred Wegener brought a beginner's mindset to the field of geology over a century ago. Like Manet, his fresh ideas did not earn acceptance readily. Wegener earned a doctorate in astronomy in 1904 and later became immersed in meteorological research. He became fascinated by the discovery of similar animal and plant organisms on different continents, as well as complementary geological features on landmasses separated by oceans. He proposed his theory of continental drift in the early 1900s. Geologists forcefully rejected his ideas. Rollin T. Chamberlin of the University of Chicago commented, "Wegener's hypothesis in general is of the footloose type, in that it takes considerable liberty with our globe, and is less bound by restrictions or tied down by awkward, ugly facts than most of its rival theories."[15] Wegener's concept only became widely accepted by scientists decades after his death.

Chester Carlson invented the process of electrophotography in the 1930s, but many companies rejected his requests for funding. Writing years later, Harold Clark noted that:

> Xerography had practically no foundation in previous scientific work. Chet put together a rather odd lot of phenomena, each of which was obscure in itself and none of which had previously been related in anyone's thinking. The result was the biggest thing in imaging since the coming of photography itself.[16]

Finally, in the mid-1940s, the company later known as Xerox decided to support Carlson. By 1965, the Xerox 914 copier accounted for over $240 million in revenue, over 60 percent of the company's total revenue. The word *Xerox* became a verb, much like *Google* is today.

In the 1980s, Barry Marshall and Robin Warren argued that bacterial infections, rather than stress, caused ulcers. Marshall explained the initial reception when he began presenting his work at medical conferences:

> To gastroenterologists, the concept of a germ causing ulcers was like saying that the Earth is flat. After that I realized my paper was going to have difficulty being accepted. You think, "It's science; it's got to be accepted." But it's not an absolute given. The idea was too weird.[17]

Frustrated by the mainstream medical community's reaction to his work, Marshall took some *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria from the stomach of an ailing patient, ingested it himself, and became quite ill. Within days, Marshall experienced vomiting, halitosis, and gastritis (an inflammation of the stomach lining). He treated himself with antibiotics and he recovered fully. Still, experts did not accept Marshall and Warren's theory for years. Finally, in 2005, they received the Nobel Prize in Medicine for their groundbreaking work.

We always hear the stories of venture capitalists striking it rich by investing at the ground level in startups that go on to achieve remarkable success. For instance, Peter Thiel invested $500,000 in Facebook in 2004. Eight years later, he sold his stake in the social media giant for more than $1 billion. However, many entrepreneurs face multiple rounds of rejection by industry experts. For example, Joe Gebbia, Brian Chesky, and Nathan Blecharczyk sought funding for their startup in 2008. They wanted to raise $150,000 in return for a 10 percent stake in their company. The co-founders approached seven accomplished and well-known investors in Silicon Valley. Five investors sent them rejection letters, while two never even replied.[18] Nine years later, their company, Airbnb, had achieved a $31 billion valuation. If one of these investors had invested back in 2008, their $150,000 investment would have been worth $3.1 billion nine years later. The Airbnb story does not prove to be unique. Even the most accomplished venture capitalists invest in many startups that do not succeed and pass on a number of deals that could have been highly lucrative. Every investor has at least one great regret.

Erin Scott, Pian Shu, and Roman Lubynsky examined data on 652 startups from MIT's Venture Mentoring Service. The service attempts to

match startups with mentors. The mentors receive data about a variety of startup ideas. They must decide what they think about the ideas without having an opportunity to review information about the founders or to meet the team in person. Scott and her colleagues examined how many of these startups went on to have their products commercialized successfully. For startups involving high research and development expenditures, the more highly rated ideas did have a better chance of being commercialized. However, the researchers checked to see if expert mentors were better at predicting a startup's success than the mentor group overall. They defined experts as people with industry-specific experience or doctoral degrees in that particular technical field. The study's results suggest that expert mentors with extensive industry experience and academic training did not forecast new venture success in R&D-intensive sectors more accurately than the mentor group overall.[19]

Why do experts fail to recognize creative genius? Victor Ottati and his colleagues have documented evidence of what they call the *earned dogmatism effect*. The scholars argue that social norms about novices versus experts play a key role in how people perceive new ideas. They explain as follows:

> Consider, for example, a seminar pertaining to cancer. Within this situation, some individuals may occupy the role of "novice" (e.g., a layperson) whereas others may occupy the role of "expert" (e.g., a cancer researcher). Because novices possess limited knowledge, social norms dictate that they should listen and learn in an open-minded fashion. The expert possesses extensive knowledge, and therefore is entitled to adopt a more dogmatic or forceful orientation. Dogmatic statements are more likely to be tolerated when the "expert" speaks than when a "novice" speaks. Novices possess limited knowledge, and as such, are expected to adopt a more humble and open-minded orientation.[20]

Ottati and his co-authors conducted a series of six experiments to study the earned dogmatism effect. In particular, they wanted to know if self-perceptions of expertise mattered. In other words, does close-minded behavior occur simply because people *perceive themselves*

to be experts, even if that might not actually be the case? In the studies, individuals were made to feel as though they were either experts or novices in a particular knowledge domain. The scholars discovered that those who felt as though they were experts tended to act in a more close-minded fashion in subsequent parts of the study. For instance, they gave a political history test to research subjects in one experiment (15 multiple-choice questions such as "Who was Richard Nixon's initial vice president?"). One-half of the subjects received easy questions, while the others tackled challenging questions. After the participants responded to all the questions, the researchers provided them false feedback. They told participants who had answered the easy questions that they had performed better than 86 percent of the test-takers. They informed the subjects responding to difficult questions that they had performed very poorly, worse than 86 percent of their fellow test-takers. The scholars then administered a cognitive test of open-mindedness. The participants who had received the positive feedback (made to feel as though they were experts) tended to exhibit more closed-mindedness, even though the feedback was completely made up! Ottati and his co-authors concluded that people become more dogmatic when they perceive themselves as experts.

Dogmatic thinking and closed-mindedness may be most prevalent when outsiders or newcomers propose theories that mark a radical break from past convention. In 1962 Thomas Kuhn wrote a groundbreaking book titled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* A physicist by training, Kuhn became one of the most influential philosophers and historians of science. He argued that science does not progress solely in a linear, incremental, and evolutionary fashion. Instead, major leaps forward occur from time to time in a revolutionary fashion. Kuhn describes these discontinuities as paradigm shifts. Controversial new models shake the foundation of a field during these revolutions. Kuhn argued that newcomers often drive the paradigm shifts:

> Almost always the men who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have been either very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change. And perhaps that point need not have been made explicit, for obviously these are the men who,

> being little committed by prior practice to the traditional rules of normal science, are particularly likely to see that those rules no longer define a playable game and to conceive another set that can replace them.[21]

The story of Wegener represents one of those groundbreaking paradigm shifts trigged by a newcomer. Experts did not simply reject his ideas about continental drift because they challenged the prevailing paradigm. Undoubtedly, the resistance to his ideas existed, in part, because he had not been trained as a geologist. Outsiders often drive paradigm shifts because they do not exhibit a bias toward the status quo. However, their outsider status and lack of specialized training makes it difficult for them to gain acceptance for their theories. How can an astronomer and meteorologist overturn centuries of thought in the field of geology? It's simply not possible! Max Planck, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1918, once remarked on the challenge of overturning a scientific paradigm. He commented, "A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it."[22]

## Double Talk on Creativity

Many creative individuals working in corporations today encounter the same type of resistance that trailblazing artists, scientists, and inventors have experienced throughout history. Experts reject their ideas and prefer to defend the status quo. Technical specialists exhibit closed-minded behavior when newcomers challenge the conventional wisdom or question established practices. Newcomers experience pressures for conformity. Leaders create an environment where people with new ideas fear speaking up. The organizational culture does not promote experimentation and risk-taking behavior. Rewards and incentive systems focus on efficiency and productivity, and they discourage learning and exploration.

At the same time, corporate leaders speak often about the need for creativity and innovation. They claim that creativity has become their

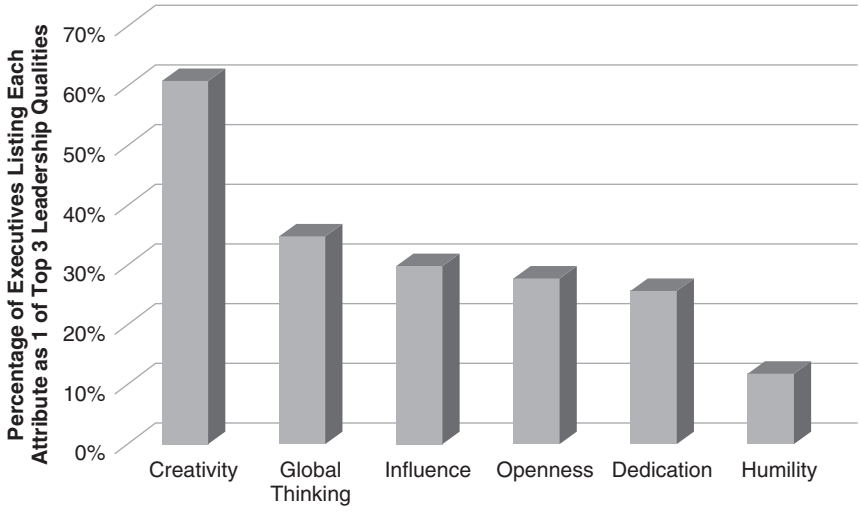


**Figure 1.1 Three Most Important Leadership Qualities in the Next Five Years**

*Source:* Data extracted from 2010 IBM CEO Study.[24]

highest priority. Several years ago, IBM conducted a Global CEO Study. The technology giant surveyed 1,541 chief executives, general managers, and public-sector leaders across 33 industries and 60 countries around the globe. Approximately 60 percent of these executives cited creativity as the most important leadership attribute needed for future success (see Figure 1.1).[23]

Chief executives say the right thing when it comes to creativity, but do they walk the walk? In 2016 the O.C. Tanner Institute surveyed approximately 3,500 employees from firms in five countries around the world. They found that most employees did not feel supported and inspired by their leaders. While executives named innovation as a top priority, most employees felt that they were not encouraged to develop new ideas, and they did not have the time and resources required to do so. The O.C. Tanner Institute concluded that many employees become disheartened and cynical when they perceive leadership calls for more creativity and innovation as "largely empty talk."[25]

## Creativity Bias

Unfortunately, a bias against creativity may be quite prevalent in organizations. Consider the work of scholar Jennifer Mueller at the University of San Diego. Her research shows that people have decidedly mixed feelings about creativity. She argues that social norms may cause people to express positive attitudes about creativity. However, people's actual behaviors may not be consistent with their espoused beliefs. She and her colleagues conducted experiments demonstrating that people value practicality over creativity when faced with conditions of uncertainty and ambiguity. Moreover, individuals may be less able to recognize creative ideas when motivated to reduce uncertainty.[26]

Mueller finds that creative individuals also may face a "penalty" when it comes to others assessing their leadership potential. She and her colleagues conducted three studies that showed that people have a tendency to view creative individuals as having less leadership potential (unless they are told to focus on charismatic individuals). Why might that be? The authors argue that people tend to have mixed feelings about creative colleagues.[27] Mueller explains, "In addition to 'visionary' and 'charismatic,' people also use words like 'quirky,' 'unfocused' [and] 'nonconformist.' The fact is people don't feel just positively about creative individuals—they feel ambivalent about them."[28] The research demonstrates a powerful dilemma. On the one hand, people express a strong desire to have creativity as a characteristic of their leaders. On the other hand, when people offer out-of-the-box ideas, they sometimes are viewed in a negative light. People think that these inventive colleagues are strange or perplexing.

The bias against creativity does not reside only in corporations. Our schools may be discouraging creative students in a variety of ways. A stream of research has shown that teachers claim to value qualities such as independent thinking and curiosity, yet they reward behaviors such as obedience and conformity.[29] Ken Robinson has been one of the most outspoken critics of how we educate our children. He quotes Picasso, who once said, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Robinson argues that our schools place a premium

on certain forms of intelligence and ability, namely those associated with traditional academic ability. Robinson jokes, "The whole purpose of public education throughout the world is to produce university professors."[30] Moreover, teachers and parents often steer students toward fields of study that they believe will lead most readily to steady employment. Look at all the attention placed on STEM disciplines these days. As a society, we seem to be saying to our children that engineering is valuable and worthwhile to study, while music or art is not.

As we grow up, we adopt attitudes and mindsets that inhibit our creativity in many ways. Consider an exercise developed years ago by Stanford creativity researcher Bob McKim. He asked adults to spend 30 seconds drawing a sketch of their neighbor. Imagine the murmurs in the room. People often squirm in their seats when presented with this task. The discomfort appears palpable. After 30 seconds, McKim asks people to show the sketch to their neighbor. What typically happens? People display their sketches to others with great trepidation. They apologize profusely for their terrible drawing. They express embarrassment at their lack of artistic ability. Interestingly, McKim found that children react quite differently to this same task. They embrace it with enthusiasm. They demonstrate pride of authorship when showing their neighbors the sketches.[31] My experience confirms McKim's finding. My 10-year old son beams with pride when he brings home an art project from school. When I'm asked to sketch an idea during a brainstorming session, I often cringe. What happens as we grow up? For a variety of reasons, we fear how others will perceive or judge us. That mindset of fear impedes our ability to be creative. Could our schools be contributing to this mindset of fear and this attitude of risk aversion? Robinson certainly believes so. Perhaps renowned science fiction author and biochemist Isaac Asimov was right when he said, "The world in general disapproves of creativity, and to be creative in public is particularly bad. Even to speculate in public is rather worrisome."[32]

## The Dire Need for Creativity

We need creativity more than ever though. We have perplexing problems to solve in education, healthcare, and poverty. In business,

established companies in a variety of industries face serious threats to their survival. Traditional brick-and-mortar retailers, for instance, struggle to cope with the e-commerce revolution. Firms such as Toys R Us, Sports Authority, and Radio Shack have gone bankrupt in recent years. One of the most storied retailers of the twentieth century, Sears, entered bankruptcy as well in October 2018 after years of decline.

Chief executives claim that creativity is a top priority because they desperately seek growth and renewal. Many large companies face a growth crisis today. A recent analysis (see Figure 1.2) demonstrates that more than one-third of the firms on the Fortune 500 list experienced a decline in revenue from 2014 to 2016. Sales declined by more than 10 percent for 59 of these companies. Meanwhile, many firms achieved slow single-digit revenue growth during this period.[33]

Investors, of course, value growth a great deal. Take the case of Amazon. While the firm has generated very little profit during its 23-year history, shareholder returns have been tremendous. Imagine that you had invested $5,000 in Amazon at its initial public offering. Precisely 20 years later, your investment would have been

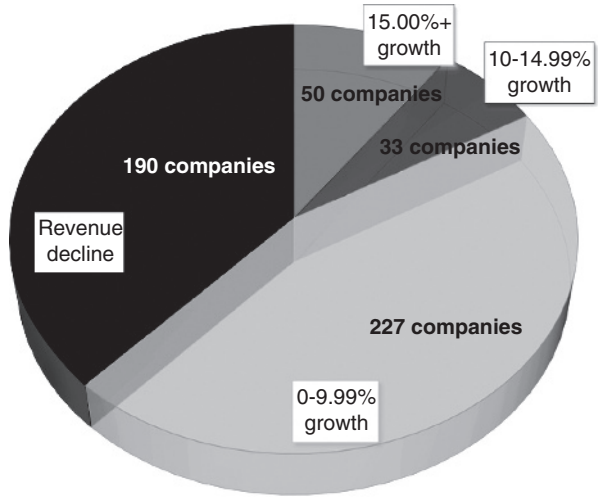


**Figure 1.2 Fortune 500 Compound Annual Growth Rate Analysis: 2014–2016**

*Source:* Analysis based on data compiled by Craft[34]

worth $2.4 million.[35] The Amazon story is not unique. McKinsey and Company conducted a study of approximately 3,000 software and online-services companies over a 22-year period. They discovered that the fastest-growing companies generated shareholder returns five times greater than the average firm. What happens when growth stalls? Few companies recover from a lengthy period of stagnation or decline, and not many chief executives keep their jobs in these situations. Employees at all levels suffer, as layoffs and facility closures often take place and morale plummets. Massive cost cutting might prop up earnings for a short time, but ultimately, firms cannot survive if the top line keeps shrinking.[36]

Companies desperately desire new growth engines, but unfortunately, it appears that great new ideas are becoming harder to find. Nicholas Bloom and his colleagues examined data on research productivity for the economy as a whole, as well as in specific industries such as semiconductors, agriculture, and medicine. They find that amazing discoveries and inventions continue to occur, but that's because we have devoted more people and resources to our innovation efforts. Meanwhile, research productivity has fallen significantly in recent decades.

In 1965 Intel co-founder Gordon Moore observed that the number of transistors per square inch of integrated circuit had doubled approximately every two years. He predicted that this trend would continue, and he proved correct in the decades that followed. However, the continued advances in semiconductor technology have required increasing amounts of investment. That research effort has been much less productive over time. Bloom and his colleagues find that, "Because of declining research productivity, it is *around 18 times* harder today to generate the exponential growth behind Moore's Law than it was in 1971."[37]

In industry after industry, companies have poured more people and more dollars into research efforts, in hopes of generating new discoveries and new revenue streams. Examining the economy as a whole, Bloom and his colleagues find that, "Since the 1930s, research effort has risen by a factor of 23—an average growth rate of 4.3 percent per year. Research productivity has fallen by an even larger amount—by a factor of 41 (or at an average growth rate of –5.1 percent per year)."[38] When it comes to innovation, we simply are not getting the bang for our buck that we used to achieve.

## The Person versus the Situation

How can we enhance the pace of invention and discovery? How do we find more creative ideas to solve our most perplexing problems? We can throw more resources at this challenge, as we have been doing for decades. Or, perhaps large companies haven't been hiring the right people. If we just find the right people, the truly breakthrough thinkers, perhaps new ideas will flourish. *Inc.* magazine ran a special feature several years ago about hiring for creativity. The writers argued that companies have to do a better job of recruiting individuals who think outside the box.[39] Indeed, some firms have taken to using a battery of tests to evaluate the creativity of job candidates. According to this line of thinking, innovative companies such as Netflix, Amazon, and Google simply have done a better job than most firms at finding the most creative minds.

Step back for a moment though. Consider the story of forty-seven students at Princeton Theological Seminary in December 1970. Two professors asked them to prepare and record a 3-to-5-minute talk as part of a study about the careers of seminary students. One-half of the students prepared talks regarding the range of jobs or professions in which seminary students could be effective and content. The others prepared talks about the Parable of the Good Samaritan (a story from the Bible about the choice to neglect or help an injured stranger along the road). After several minutes, the researchers informed the students that they would have walk to a different campus building to record their talks. They told some students to hurry over to the other building, while informing others that they had ample time and might even have to wait before recording their speech.

When the theology students walked across campus, they encountered someone slumped in a doorway with their eyes closed and their head down. The "victim" coughed and groaned when a student approached. The researchers recorded the extent to which each student offered assistance to the victim. What did they find? Not surprisingly, the students in a hurry tended to offer much less assistance to the person slumped in the doorway. Perhaps more shockingly, the students who had prepared the talk about the Good Samaritan were no more likely to lend a hand than those who had prepared the generic speech about future jobs. Several students

actually stepped over the victim as they rushed to the next building to present their lecture! Differences in personality type did not explain why some helped the victim, while others did not.[40]

Our initial inclination might be that "good" people help others, while "bad" people rush past. We could not imagine ourselves ignoring a fellow human being lying injured in a doorway. However, this study suggests that we underestimate the power of circumstances. The situation and our environment shape our behavior more than we would like to think. Time and again, our actions reinforce this fundamental point about human behavior.

Ask yourself: Did Paris in the 1850s lack creative new artists or did the salon system squelch the emergence of new techniques and perspectives? All leaders in search of fresh ideas must ask themselves whether they have a people problem or a situation problem. Do firms have a dearth of creative people, or are they blocking and resisting the Manets, Wegeners, and Marshalls already in their midst? If leaders conclude that they have a people problem, they will spend inordinate amounts of time and energy trying to find more creative job candidates. They may not spend much time looking in the mirror, examining their own closed-minded or dogmatic behavior, or evaluating the culture they have created. They might not evaluate how their organization treats newcomers with fresh perspectives.

Alternatively, leaders might come to recognize that all people have creative potential. We just need the right conditions in which to flourish. For many growth-starved firms, the problem resides in the environment, not the workforce. The best leaders identify how and why their organizations may resist new ideas or exhibit a creativity bias. They build environments that neither marginalize those who challenge the conventional wisdom nor punish those who often refuse to conform. Once leaders recognize that they have a situation problem, not a people problem, they can begin identifying and removing the true barriers to creativity in their organizations.

## The Six Mindsets

In the pages that follow, we will explore how leaders can reshape the organizational environment so as to enable creativity to blossom.

Specifically, the book describes the six organizational mindsets that must be transformed for people to fulfill their creative potential. These mindsets encompass a collection of explicit and implicit beliefs that shape how people analyze and evaluate, make decisions, and take action with regard to imaginative, original ideas. These belief systems may permeate all facets of an enterprise. The six creativity-inhibiting mindsets are:

- **The Linear Mindset:** Many organizations fail to understand and embrace the iterative and discontinuous nature of the creative process. They mistakenly try to move from analysis to idea formulation to execution in a step-by-step manner.
- **The Benchmarking Mindset:** Firms study their competitors closely, but in so doing, they experience fixation. Consequently, they adopt copycat approaches rather than creating distinctive strategies.
- **The Prediction Mindset:** Managers have a desperate desire to see what's next and they exhibit overconfidence in the ability of experts to forecast the future. The insatiable need to predict just how big ideas will become actually impedes creativity.
- **The Structural Mindset:** Managers often resort to changes in organizational structure as a means of stimulating creativity and improving performance. They fail to recognize the limited efficacy of redrawing the lines and arrows on the organization chart time and again.
- **The Focus Mindset:** Organizations believe that teams will excel at creative work if they focus intensively, perhaps even secluded from their colleagues. They fail to recognize that the best creative thinkers oscillate between states of focus and unfocus.
- **The Naysayer Mindset:** Managers encourage people to critique each other's ideas early and often. Unfortunately, the failure to manage dissent and contrarian perspectives constructively causes many good ideas to wither on the vine.

These mindsets represent powerful obstacles that must be dismantled for the creative process to thrive. Leaders do not need to generate more great ideas. They must clear the path so that curious thinkers throughout their teams and organizations can experiment, learn, and discover. Trust your people, remove the hurdles, and bold and original ideas will come forth.

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