



The word
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“Ask any CEO in the world
to write a top-five wish list,
and we guarantee that
‘more ideas - better ideas’
will show up.”

Harvard Business Review:
Eureka! July/August 2004

And, no-one wants to get shown up.

Really smart thinking takes issue with those ideas that don't hold water. Ideas are inspiration thirsty, but their realisation is resource hungry. So while we're at once prodigious, we're not too proud to see which of our progeny deserve a full education.

Great ideas drive growth, poor ideas unnerve navigation. Some business acceleration schemes talk brutally of '*drowning puppies*'; we prefer to control pedigree and breed responsibly.

So, what do we actually offer? The Germans would call it *Weltanschauung*, and Aristotle gave us a word for actualisation, rather than just potentiality, in *entelechy*. So you can see why we might refer to it as...

THE MAGISTRY

SECRET
PSYCHE
FILE: Q404#0001



You may never really see it
but you know it works for you

THE MAGISTRY



Churchill said, “Out of intense complexities, intense simplicities emerge.”

Perhaps then those who muddle through, complicating matters, are actually doing us a service? Surely, eventually, they’ll make such a mess of things that the answers will become self-evident, or as we prefer to say, ‘bleedin’ obvious’.

Given the fundamental fact that business is a simple triptych: product, cash, customers, how is it that so many manage to become so bewildered?

Thank heavens then for the people who can size up complex scenarios and come to a rapid decision, which is well-presented and cognizant. The ability to look through both ends of the telescope simultaneously may register as ‘Freak!’ in the eyes of some; but there are those who see broad spectrum, and yet zoom in on the finer detail at a stroke. We pride ourselves on that ability. In fact, for us *freak* is a positive epithet which means ‘free roaming extends acquired knowledge’. The more facts you pick up, and the more you see, the more you *can* see. We love synergies and serendipity-doo-dah.

That isn’t to say we’re slaves to ‘blue skies thinking’, but we are suspicious of ‘received wisdom’. Did you ever stop to wonder - where the person before you acquired it?



Purpose: leaps of faith

It's no accident that we became perpetrators of purpose.

We don't breakdown when projects and problems don't break down into to-do lists. We're not naturally borrowers or burrowers and actually *prefer* to sit out in the open, riding shotgun.

As a business leader, you'll be mindful of that tipping point where intellectual rigour becomes rigor mortis. Witness the recessive loops preferred by those who have enjoyed the same six months experience forty times in a twenty year career. For them, the alarm bells start ringing once they see that inspiration relies on faith i.e. belief without proof; in creative parlance, intuition.

Really effective teams are those where left-brain skills (logical) and right-brain talents (creative) actually enjoy a meeting of minds. Bringing such gifted people together is a talent in itself. 'Controlling people' are seen to have a tendency to stifle, rather than nurture, creative people; while at the same time creative people can appear a bit 'flakey'.

But unstructured knowledge or intuition often defies description when still a *gut feeling*. Even accepted experts can't retrace all those synaptic synergies that lead to 'just knowing', and the absence of a carefully reasoned answer is not always contrary to an articulate solution. However it's a little disingenuous to claim *genius* when an awful lot of perspiration often precedes true inspiration.





Stock: answers

Are stock answers made from a cube?

Stock Q&A. E.g. Best film of all time? Ans. Citizen Kane. Admittedly this kind of feedback doesn't raise eyebrows, but neither does it raise spirits.

'Stock concerns' mean the blue-chips are down, the stakes are high, and some highly observant, original thinking is needed - fast. Given enough time for observation or experimentation, supported by the necessary theory and empirical research, anyone can come up with data - but that data may not be interpreted to reveal answers. Cue smart people who can hold their ground. Give them a good shake and their ideas still stick. You can't throw them a curve ball because they thrive on the curve. By *them*, of course, we mean us.

But in terms of out-sourcing 'unstructured' knowledge, it's getting mighty confusing. Business consultancies and creative agencies are offering merged services. There's talk about being ideas positive and execution, or channel, neutral. As if the absence of polarity can be attractive. Hmmm...

These re-labelling exercise are transparent. Creative agencies want more business, and business consultancies are desperate to be seen as more creative. They're trying to respond to the executive request for a more enlightening *show'n'tell* i.e. 'Show, or tell me something I don't know already'. With one overruling caveat 'Please, make it something relevant...'





Suppose: transpose, transfuse...

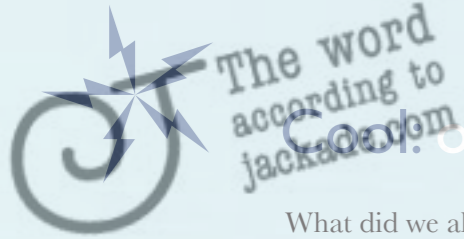
'Breaking new ground' sounds physical and aggressive, and truly new thinking only survives through argument. Insight is often difficult to quantify, and positive argument is the lifeblood of new business. An insight to incite?

To transfuse thinking, the things you have to say have to sway opinion. Everything we actually hear elicits a response. That response may be through conditioning, or it may be coloured by current criteria and emotional environment. It's important to assess these internal and external factors and factor them into our observations and decisions.

We always seek objective criteria to convert potential ideas and realise value. We interrogate and elucidate in order to identify and achieve real goals - and no-one can object to clear objectives.

When dealing with most creative agencies you'd be forgiven for thinking there's a lack of such intellectual rigour. They in turn might be forgiven for shallow thinking. In a world of proliferation and distraction we're all 'scanning'. There's a tendency to regard an immediate hook, catchy slogan or visual metaphor as a whole proposition. How do you resolve an equation where it takes months and years to develop a product, and maybe a few seconds to sell it, or not? Incentive schemes can overcome the initial concern, or "What's in it for me?" But the 'give them something shiny to distract them' trend doesn't build real brand rapport and corporate camaraderie. Does it?





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Cool or just cold-blooded?

What did we all do before we had computers? Was the world a better place, and did the work we produce say more about us as individuals? These are moot points, because the world has changed; but as they say, the more things change, the more they stay the same. The style-over-content debate has babbled in ever-decreasing creative circles for years. It used to be that a great visualiser could make a mediocre idea look absolutely fabulous. Now, observing the cliché, any bedroom-based teenager using sophisticated software features can render whole careers obsolete.

This is analogous to movie-making polarities. There are the CGI-rich, byte-based blockbusters; those movies with an utterly improbable visually astonishing event scheduled every 7 minutes. Then there's real narrative with the emotional intelligence to surprise and inspire us. Then, amidst the hype and hybrids technological virtuosity, vision and personality meet to confound genre, think of it as *Toy Story* telling.

To produce a real experience you require real experience. Welcome to our world.





Domain: decisions, decisions...

No-one takes on board *all* the information - no-one can. We get bombarded, often ambushed, 24/7 from 360° with semiautomatic marketing messages. As a result, there are only 3 absolutes in decision-making:

- a) Choice is stress.
- b) The more information we receive the more confused we become, and
- c) Delegation is gratifying: it's easier to accept other people's mistakes.

Sadly, there's then the slow-burning doubt that 'there must be something better than this somewhere?' Such anxiety, the Occident's *leit-motiv*, is a blunt axe denying us any true sense of satisfaction. That means that we're always essentially 'making do'. So, what can we do to mend this paradox?

Fortunately business can rely on the committee. This fail-safe means that we can get several people together, arbitrarily assign them an area of responsibility and then allow them to thoroughly confuse each other. The final committee decision is a protracted process, and inevitably flawed, but it is agreed. Any individual misgivings are safely submerged by the assurance that there is absolute safety in numbers.

But there's no accounting for the cost of such decisions. The herd instinct dictates that no matter how dumb the decision, the important thing is that the majority agrees... never underestimate the power of stupid people in large numbers. The only certain counter measure is a Fast Elite Agile Small Team*.

* *Now we're talking... about a FEAST of ideas.*





Honest John: stand up guise

Pub quiz question: What do The Bible and the CIA have in common?

John Chapter 8, verse 32, 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free' is the 'motto' for the CIA. Given the true meaning of one, and the purpose of the other, can anyone reconcile this adjacency to the agency? Alliteration and politics aside, only 1- of - 4 CIA areas is covert. Given the confidential and decentralised nature of this 'workforce', it's plausible that their vocabulary fits our 'mission'. Agents are taught an entire array of 'the tradecraft skills', until the skills become reflex. This is when *second nature*, the ability to be highly cognizant and attentive in any given situation or environment, allows us to 'improvise, adapt, modify and - overcome'.

At *The Magistry* our affinity for difficulty, and challenging situations makes us field-expedient; and we've proved it with field-experience. There are times when sheer force of numbers offers no advantage, or actually works against you. We're that rare breed, a tight knit team which has really coalesced, to the point where we can *second guess* each other. It maybe that we really are *freaks* (we prefer the term 'naturally gifted'). Or, it may be that we're savvy, keen, and resourceful. What we share is a 'common sense' consensus, which contemporary jargonistas call 'deep smarts'.

As you might expect, this makes us hard to keep up with - but we're always easy to get a long with.





Now then: what keeps you awake?

It's funny how we talk about people being an 'unknown quantity'. In the case of it being an individual, it's like - 'Hello...' there's *one* of them. Trying new things can be cool if we're talking about an Amusement Park, but when it comes to management we don't want to start a roller-coaster ride. But there are unavoidable, as yet, unforeseen issues which will become part and parcel of our future deliverables. Then we simply have to try something, or someone new. The \$64,000 questions are, will it, will they deliver?

The Magistry is a possible ally and source of inspiration when it comes to anticipating these future imponderables. We've been known to be both persuasive and prescient, offering more remedy than diagnosis (which is refreshing). And as Einstein admitted, the greatest obstacle to unravelling The Theory of Relativity, was working out *how* to think about the problem. Here's an example of ESP: an Executive Summary Proposal of 'one we made earlier...'

Phase I Definitions				
Motivation <i>The ability to...</i>	Object <i>Focus on...</i>	Perspective <i>Whose POV?</i>	Domain <i>Ownership</i>	Scope <i>Allocation</i>
Understand Assess Manage Learn Improve	Product/Service Process Model Metric Theory	Corporate owner Customer/user Designer Marketer Project Manager	Client User groups THE MAGISTRY	1 project 1 team x projects 1 team 1 project y teams x projects y teams
Phase II Planning				
Design & Marketing Brainstorming/concept spread Experimental design		Criteria Direct criteria Indirect criteria	Measurement Measure selection and definition Data collection/procedures/tools	
Phase III Operations				
Realisation Pilot study Participant selection/commissioning		Execution Field Expediency Data Collection/Validation	Performance and Data Analysis Preliminary review Formal review	





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Ignition: sparking off...

You've seen that we're strict about structure, and never lax in our lexicon. But for all this, *The Magistry* is nothing in isolation. This is an ongoing story and the next chapter always relies on your participation.

You can visit our web site www.themagistry.com. If you'd prefer, you can give us a call on +44(0)1428 652262. Alternatively, sit tight and being the proactive people we are, we'll call you...

... but that's more than enough about us.

What would you like to do?

