

World Class Professionals

‘Creatively thinking their way through the financial situation’

Wednesday, 12th November 2008

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

“You can analyse the past but you have to design the future, otherwise someone or something will design it for you...!” Dr Edward de Bono

Summary of Event:

On Wednesday 12 November 2008 the Manchester Metropolitan University hosted a day at their Geoffrey Manton Building, with the aim of helping the regions business leaders and decision makers to creatively think their way through the current financial situation using techniques developed by ‘thinking guru’ Dr Edward de Bono.

In the morning, the senior MMU academics and the regions business leaders worked with a Master de Bono Trainer to understand the underlying principles. They were also given the very rare opportunity of meeting Dr Edward de Bono himself. He gave examples of his techniques and answered the audiences probing questions, inviting the audience to think differently and to create the correct atmosphere for creative thinking by breaking their logical ‘straight line’ thoughts to think laterally.

Dr de Bono made the comment; *“My techniques are ‘software’ for the mind, our thinking needs to be developed and these techniques work across all cultures. Individuals are provided with processes and techniques to enable them to learn to be creative, it’s just like any other subject; maths, cooking, etc. The partnership with MMU is an excellent opportunity to provide these techniques to a wide and diverse audience.”*

The Vice Chancellor of MMU, Professor John Brooks commented; *“The Edward de Bono techniques stand by their achievement worldwide. Since 1960 they have been used successfully with large and prevailing organisations. This is the first time the de Bono Foundation has worked with an English university and we at MMU are delighted we were chosen as partners for the next ten years. There are many benefits, one main one for us is to review our approach to the curriculum and how we face the future and help our trainee teachers to affect the future generations positively.”*

The afternoon offered an opportunity for the audience to use some of the techniques first hand and to address current issues affecting everyone. This session was facilitated by a Master de Bono Trainer and the audience had a chance to take tangible solutions home with them. The focus was on: “How to maximise the potential of the current financial situation to create a better long-term effective platform that will ensure survival and economic growth”.

Main Conclusions /Outcomes:

The day finished with a Cheese and Wine session allowing the audience to share their outcomes from the days lively exchange of ideas. The ‘think tanks’ considered a wide range of possible options – from challenging the current banking rules to an entire re-think of modern economics! It was evident from the outcomes that five major areas had been considered that could address the focus; and will be considered when planning MMU’s role in SCF: Improved Professional Support for Sustainable Futures. The role of the professional in bringing about sustainable change is one MMU will focus on during the coming year.

1. The concept of a ‘One World Bank’ was considered and evaluated – a global system with airport-like ‘hubs’ to manage global monetary trends, etc. It was seen as an exciting and fascinating possibility to balance Capitalism with Marxism !
2. To demote the consumer society and create needs-driven economics that could encourage a move focus away from materialism and reduce over-lending. Also, to create community-owned co-operative banks that could provide ethical borrowing alternatives for local communities.
3. To overhaul the UK (and possibly European) taxation system. To reduce taxes in the short-term and then to re-structure the system to create less demand for borrowing while increasing the taxation burden on the ‘bonus culture’.
4. To create a new infrastructure of training and self-development – to up-skill those out of work, to offer continuing education as an integral part of all employee development and to find effective ways of promoting home-working. To develop a learning culture that would instil everyone with a better understanding of ‘life skills’ from responsible parenting to work/life balance and from budgeting to moral responsibility.
5. To invest in ‘fresh thinking’ to promote a culture of innovation, design and individual responsibility in all aspects of living - from household recycling to healthcare, from mass production to self-sufficiency. To seek out new ‘blue ocean’ untapped markets and promote enterprise in everything we do.

The success of the day was affirmed by the interviews that were recorded with some audience members. These will be loaded onto websites in January 2009. In the meantime, here are some examples of the comments made;

“We have a relationship already with MMU through the Institute of Education, Centre for Innovation and Enterprise which is how we heard about the event today. We already believe that education and support for our staff is critical, but today has taught us that the staff can be more creative in their roles both internally and externally with our customers. There is a stigma about ‘creativity and innovation’ but our business needs fresh ideas and these techniques allow us to tap that potential in our staff without fear of feeling foolish. We will take the 6 Thinking Hats back to our managers and staff, get involved in training, and change the way we think about our business.”

“We are impressed with the partnership between MMU and de Bono Foundation UK. We wish more people used the techniques because we know they work as we use them regularly in our business, the quicker people adopt them the better. The 6 Thinking Hats aids collaboration and creative thinking about problem solving. Anything that improves a person’s skill set enhances their employability and the

employer's performance. Employers should train their staff in the de Bono techniques as it will be key to their competitive success.”

“We are living in interesting times and it derives a new way of thinking. I have been intrigued to hear about the de Bono methods as an approach of achieving this new way of thinking. It develops individual skills and abilities that enable thinking with a different ‘slant’. Our profession of architects needs a way of ‘re’ and ‘up-skilling’ plus continuous development to aid skills retention. The de Bono techniques directly apply to our industry sector. It’s a new way of thinking of how to learn, a way of developing your own personal skills, which leads to a lifetime of development.”

“I am new to the de Bono techniques so I am very pleased to have come across them today. As we are in a creative business we work with creativity and innovation on a daily basis, we design today what is a commodity tomorrow. We sell value from our business to our clients so we need to be ahead of our competitors with creativity and innovation. For us, the de Bono techniques will allow us to learn ways of getting more out of our staff, producing better dialogue, thinking more laterally, this is not just a nice idea for us, this is a must and is critical to our business if we want to stay ahead.”

Future Engagement / Impact:

The outcomes from all of the Smart City Futures events for professionals, policy makers and citizens will be organised into a plan for the future of the Manchester City-Region and will feed into the final conference in July 2009. In addition, MMU will build on the relationships formed on the day and work together with the regions leaders to deliver world class professionals using the de Bono techniques of serious creativity and constructive thinking.