



Ideas man

CREATIVITY IS INTEGRAL TO A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS, SAYS **PAUL SLOANE**, CHAIR OF THE BRITISH QUALITY FOUNDATION'S INNOVATION UNIT AND DIRECTOR OF DESTINATION INNOVATION— BUT HOW DO NEW IDEAS INFORM HIS OWN WORKING LIFE?

Q. Can you describe an average day's work?

A. I don't have an average day because I'm either doing a job for a client in which case I'm on site at a workshop or at an event, or I'm working from my office which is located in my home. In that case I'm carrying out administrative tasks, marketing and sales follow up.

Q. What is the most enjoyable aspect of your job?

A. The freedom I have to do what I want, when I want; to pursue interesting and challenging assignments; and to meet interesting clients and work with them at a high level to help them to improve the levels of innovation within their own organisations.

Q. In what ways do you think of yourself as innovative?

A. I'm always looking for new ways to help innovation clients, new ways to promote what I do, and new ways to get the innovation message across. But I wouldn't claim to be the most innovative person in the world, in just the same way a great tennis coach doesn't have to be a great tennis player. To help people become more innovative you just have to understand the techniques and the methods and what's holding other people back.

Q. Do you think you can learn how to be creative or is it something that you're born with?

A. We all use our imaginations when we're children, but gradually as we get older the use of our imaginations and our creativity is crushed out of us by the routine of work, and it's a question of finding that imagination muscle again and flexing it.

Q. Do you think some people are scared of innovation?

A. Innovation is risky and dangerous, but standing still and doing nothing is more dangerous. Sticking with the current model and refusing to embrace change is very dangerous. So there's a risk either way.

Q. Who would you cite as one of history's greatest innovators?

A. Henry Ford was a great innovator, in what he did with

Ford Motors Corporation. Richard Branson is seen by many as an innovator – he has started over 200 companies. Many of these ventures have been successful, but some have still failed. Akio Morita of Sony, the person who introduced the Walkman, was a great innovator. But many of the most successful innovators are unsung heroes, people who just found a better way of doing something.

Q. What is the biggest barrier to creativity?

A. I think the concept that if we work harder we can get out of this challenge is a big barrier, and one of the most common impediments is lack of time. People often don't have the time or budget to try new things. Because they're working so hard on their day job they don't experiment with anything new or give themselves the opportunity to explore and to be creative.

Q. Do you ever worry yourself that you might run out of new ideas?

A. Sometimes I do, but then I try to do something different. I try to do a new thing every day, such as meeting new people, getting some new stimulation, reading a new book, looking at things in a different way. You've got to constantly do that to stop yourself slipping into a rut and getting stuck into a monotonous routine.

Q. What is the most useful service in your opinion that Destination Innovation can offer clients?

A. Many people don't think their team can be creative. They think they've tried, but they haven't come up with any new ideas for a while. They're often a bit risk averse and scared to try things. It's important to give people the confidence to be innovative, to generate new ideas then to evaluate and implement them.

Q. If you could team up with one contemporary business person, who would you choose and why?

A. I admire Stelios Haji-Ioannou – he's done some great things with his easyJet. He's a really dynamic rule breaker and innovator. I'd love to work with him 