

CORPORATED MANAGEMENT / HUMAN RESOURCES

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THE rapidly evolving business environment of the world today has triggered sweeping changes to the way businesses are managed.

Companies around the world are placing greater emphasis on innovation than ever before.

A new generation of individuals is now needed to support a new business paradigm.

This new business paradigm embraces design thinking as a driving force to deliver innovation, to enhance creativity and productivity.

Organisations that recognise and adopt this new business paradigm are re-thinking their business models.

Traditional strategic business approaches of adapting an existing business model are on the brink of obsolescence.

Management are now adding value to their business by re-thinking the entire process – from shaving costs, adding new revenue streams and offering product services to creating brand promise, re-inventing existing product lines and creating a thematically desirable continuum of new products.

Design is placed at the core of a business strategy.

Employees' new challenges

What can employees of today do to keep up?

How can they think better and add value to what they are doing as an investment for the future?

To be prepared to confront the new challenges in the new business paradigm, employees must now develop design thinking as a core competency.

They should understand the following:

What is design?

Design today has the influence to change organisational culture and practice.

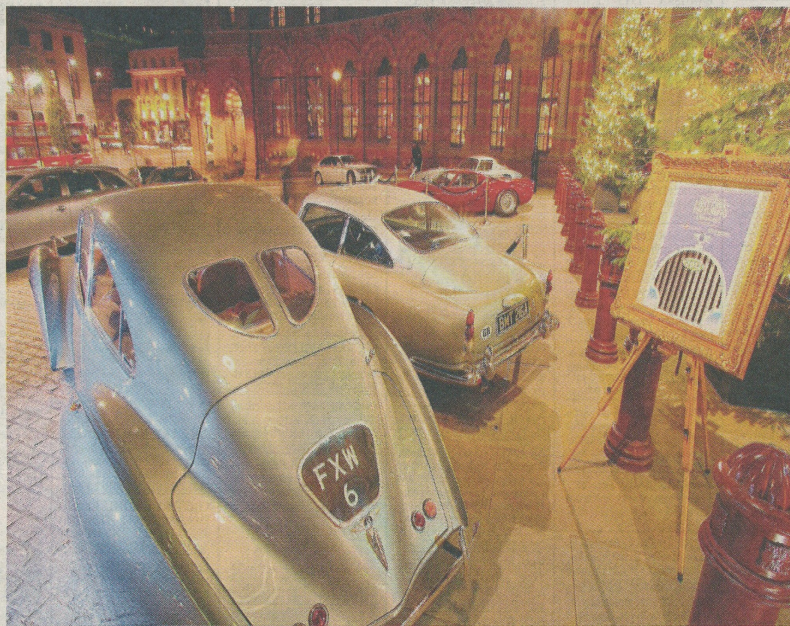
It can help companies to change their organisational process to better understand what their customers need, and prompt them to create experiences that consumers yearn for or to fuel customers' desires.

The role of design in a creative organisation

Today, design is no longer associated

Put on your creative thinking hat

Invest in design thinking for the new business paradigm.



Design today can prompt companies to fuel customers' desires. - AFP

with merely dealing with product aesthetics.

The role of design has become strategic, and its functions in creative organisations have become critical to their success in innovation.

Design has extended its influence into the realm of product services, from which product service systems are developed to enhance productivity.

The strategic function of design

Design is a value-add process and product that can be used as a strategic tool for product branding and innovation to create

competitive advantage for business success.

How designers think

In the new business paradigm, employees are expected to think like designers, approaching problems creatively.

This involves embracing creative thinking approaches to map out novel strategies to overcome business challenges, experimenting with new approaches to generate new ideas and testing ideas that have not been previously considered.

It can also include accepting failure as part of the process and learning from the experience.

How to embrace design thinking as a framework to generate creative ideas

Design has become the management skill of the future as design embodies the creative thinking process for delivering innovation.

Design thinking provides the framework to seek new meaning and alternative ways of seeing and thinking to inspire the generation of creative ideas and concepts.

How to use the mental tools of design thinking

These will help employees solve problems creatively and to address issues and conflicts in business chal-

lenges. Cognitive processes that affect our thinking behaviour – that is, unleash creative thinking capabilities – include creative visualisation, creative improvisation and visual thinking.

Characteristics of the creative

People who engage in design thinking have the following characteristics:

- Their minds are open to new possibilities;
- They constantly ask good questions;
- They question convention;
- They take chances;
- They try new approaches to doing things;
- They experiment with novel ideas to generate alternative potential solutions to a problem;
- They solve problems creatively; and
- They thrive on diverse insights from a wide perspective of the real world.

Creative employees are assets to any business organisation that desires to go beyond the known and established boundaries, to trust intuition to advance into new frontiers and territories.

These individuals cultivate creativity, embrace creative thinking behaviour and develop the talent of communicating with visual narratives.

These are skill sets of and for the future, and creative employees will thrive in the new business landscape. - Singapore Straits Times/Asia News Network

■ **ARTICLE by Keith T. E. Tan, a training consultant with NUS Extension, which conducts courses on design thinking.**

