Creativity
How Gustavson grads nurture the spark

SPACE CASE
Sci-fi writer Bennett Coles
I HELP TURN DATA INTO LITTLE BLACK DRESSES.

What attracted Rachel Cuthbert to the Certified Management Accountant program was the opportunity to gain hands-on work in an industry. Fashion, being one of her passions, was no surprise. Rachel landed at Artile, a North American fashion boutique. She credits her CMA with giving her the tools to understand the business side of fashion. It’s a career choice that fits perfectly. To learn more about the CMA Program, contact Shannon Thompson at Shannon@cma.ca.
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The University of Victoria is a top ranked Canadian university with an internationally accredited business school.
These days, it seems like the next big thing arrives on an hourly basis: a new technology, service or product that you swear you thought of two years ago—or at least wish you had. If you fall into the latter category, you may be grappling with how to improve your creativity.

Prevailing wisdom would have us believe that one is either born blessed with creative genes or doomed to a life devoid of imagination. But here’s the truth: innovative thinking can be strengthened through practice, just like a muscle. The more you work on it, the better you will get. If you fall into the latter category, you may be reinventing the wheel or rehashing an idea you swore you thought of two years ago—or at least wish you had.

Here are some yogic ways to foster creativity in your day-to-day life (no spandex required):

1. Be present: Focus on the task at hand. Multi-tasking won’t help you generate ideas in a brainstorming session.
2. Be humble: No one begins anything as a professional. In fact, the less you know, the better. You’re more likely to make mistakes, which is where creativity can sneak up on you.
3. Practise: Think of ways to incorporate creativity in your day-to-day. Changing up your routine might be just the thing to let some creative thoughts flourish.
4. Focus on strengths: Don’t focus solely on your weaknesses at the expense of where you naturally shine. View difficulties as challenges for innovation.
5. Have fun: If you don’t enjoy it, you probably won’t do it.

First MGB Crop

In September 2010, we welcomed the first group of students into our brand new Master of Global Business (MGB) program. For nine months, our 18 students (eight of whom were UVic BCom grads) worked, lived, studied and travelled with three GMBA students and classmates from National Sun Yat-Sen University in Taiwan and Johannes Kepler University in Austria. After their studies in Canada, Taiwan and Austria, they went on to complete global internships in places such as Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Munich, Delhi, Linz, Montreal and Toronto. They have now completed their degrees and secured professional contacts, international friendships and cross-cultural confidence that will serve them well in their future careers. Everyone at the Gustavson School is immensely proud of them. Congratulations! 

We♥Interns

Internships occur at the end of the Master of Global Business program and prepare students to work in a multicultural, global environment in the fields of international marketing, global strategy, logistics, supply chain management, financial management, global leadership and consulting. Interns complete language courses in Mandarin and German and, prior to placements, a comprehensive, award-winning internship preparation course.

How to hire an intern

If your company works in Europe, Asia or North America and you’re looking for an intern who can bring a global perspective to your business, then this is the program for you. You just need a defined project of eight to 16 weeks. Contact Marguerite Casey-Wolnicki, internship co-ordinator, at mcassey@uvic.ca or 250-853-3202 to arrange a posting.

You Told Us

Defining ‘social enterprise’

Last issue we introduced you to businesses that exhibit a strong sense of social responsibility. We termed them social enterprises. But our readers clarified that “social enterprise” actually refers to a business that is owned by a non-profit organization. Profits generated by such enterprises are reinvested back into the businesses to fund additional good works. This is a new and growing business model that differs from for-profit companies with a strong social responsibility component to their operations.

Please send your feedback regarding Business Class to: dsouali@uvic.ca.

Sound Off

Make a tip video for students

If you could give advice to current students, what would you say? The Co-op and Careers Office is recruiting alumni to provide short video advice clips (30 to 60 seconds) for BCom and MBA students. Do you have a secret to making the most of your co-op? Want to brag about your killer resume? Chat about the co-op experience from an employer’s perspective now that you’re on the other side of the desk? Put it on video!

Emailed videos welcome. For information, contact career educator Bev Stevens: bco@uvic.ca.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE OUR STUDENT INTERNS ARE?

Europe (Germany, Austria, Netherlands)
Asia (Hong Kong, India, Malaysia)
North America (Canada)
63% of interns were offered permanent positions after completion of the program.

Biz Bites

These days, it seems like the next big thing arrives on an hourly basis: a new technology, service or product that you swear you thought of two years ago—or at least wish you had. If you fall into the latter category, you may be re-inventing the wheel or rehashing an idea you swore you thought of two years ago—or at least wish you had.

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Zen Tips for Creative Thinking

By Rachelle LeBlanc Quiney, MBA ’10

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It takes some creative thinking to compete with and beat the giants of your industry. Keri’s book is an excellent read on the organizational change made by the Tampa Bay Rays to transform a perennial laughingstock of a baseball team into one that is competing in a division with the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox, two teams with a huge financial advantage over Tampa Bay—and every other team in baseball. The new owners had made their fortune working on Wall Street and decided to apply the tactics they learned in investment banking to the baseball operations side of their business. Winning two of the last three division titles against teams with much higher payrolls is proof that financial muscle can’t always guarantee success.

One of the best takeaways for organizations is Keri’s definition of arbitrage with regard to targeting personnel muscle can’t always guarantee success.

After the fact.

Simon Rose, MBA ‘06

By Dianne George

Creativity comes in all shapes and sizes. And according to Sue Paish, CEO of Canada’s 400 independently owned Pharmasave stores, it also means different things to different people.

“I don’t have a rigid definition of creativity,” she says. “It doesn’t have to be a great work of art, it could just be moving to the next phase of life, such as making the transition to university.”

Paish, while on route to speak to BCom students at the close of the annual Workplace Skills Conference in Victoria this September, took a moment to discuss the creative government-relations strategy that has earned Pharmasave top marks from its suppliers. “Historically pharmacies have had a distant relationship with regulators, so at Pharmasave we worked hard to reshape the perception that regulators and others in the community have of community pharmacy. We focus on helping stakeholders understand that community pharmacy is the most accessible provider of front-line health services in Canada. Once that is on the table, the conversations about pharmacies are very interesting. We talk about how pharmacy might be able to ‘bend’ the health care cost curve, improve patient outcomes and make our health system more efficient—all from one shift in perspective. Who’s to say that’s not creative?”

Her comments to students were also about shifting perspective. She said she believes that the secret of unlocking the potential for innovation within all of us is to lead a life based on values.

“The secret’ may sound almost trite, but I do believe that today the innovation and creativity that is innate in all of us (admittedly, some more than others) is choked out of us through our multi-tasking, busy schedules and our perpetual partial engagement,” says Paish. “Fundamentally to finding this ‘secret’ is to live a life that is based on values, where we accept that different is OK, where we persevere and where we give and take credit with grace.”

She punctuated her remarks with examples from her own experience, such as the time when, as a young mother, she turned down an opportunity to become the managing partner at one of Vancouver’s largest law companies—Fasken Martineau DuMoulin. Even in 2000 it was considered rare for a woman to head a major law firm, but it was even more rare for a youthful 40-year-old to take the position.

But it takes more than being true to your values to be successful. It also takes perseverance and determination, says Paish. “Your future is going to be different than what you’ve imagined and having goals and sticking to them will help you get there,” she says. “You have to be prepared for others to say you’re wrong and don’t know what you are doing. It’s not easy and others may laugh at you, but determination based on strong values is always worthwhile.”

Grace and the ability to give and accept thanks are also part of the equation. “Grace is something that is escaping us more and more and I think we should be able to give and accept thanks with grace,” she says. “There’s not a single thing that I’ve done without the help of others. So every day I say thank you.”

Paish wrapped up her speech with a final note: “Choose how you live,” she said, quoting folk singer Joan Baez. “If we are personally happy, then we will do what we do better.”

The Extra 2%: How Wall Street Strategies Took a Major League Baseball Team from Worst to First

Jonah Keri

ESPN, 2011, 272 pages

A classic and philosophical treatise by renowned happiness and creativity psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. In a highly readable style, he documents 30 years of research on what creativity is, how creative people work and live, and how we can make our own lives more creative. A read that rewards by making the mysteries of the creative process understandable and accessible.

—Robin Dyke

A Sense of Urgency

John P. Kotter

Harvard Business Press, 2008, 196 pages

“7 all starts with a sense of urgency.” Kotter’s book opens with those words. He goes on to assert that the single biggest error people make when trying to spark change is not creating a strong enough sense of urgency in those around them. He introduces one strategy and four tactics for increasing urgency in your organization and successfully leading change.

Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What’s Right

Mary C. Gentile

Yale University Press, 2010, 273 pages

How do you stand up for your values when they conflict with your boss, colleagues, customers, or shareholders? Gentile offers advice, exercises and scripts for a wide range of ethical dilemmas. The overall message is that it isn’t about what’s right or wrong, but knowing how to act on your values in the face of opposing pressure. An exercise in empowerment.

—Cindy Ralph

Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi


A classic and philosophical treatise by renowned happiness and creativity psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. In a highly readable style, he documents 30 years of research on what creativity is, how creative people work and live, and how we can make our own lives more creative. A read that rewards by making the mysteries of the creative process understandable and accessible.

—Robin Dyke

Brain Storm

Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention

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A classic and philosophical treatise by renowned happiness and creativity psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. In a highly readable style, he documents 30 years of research on what creativity is, how creative people work and live, and how we can make our own lives more creative. A read that rewards by making the mysteries of the creative process understandable and accessible.

—Robin Dyke

Sex, Money, Happiness and Death: The Quest for Authenticity

Manfred Kets De Vries

Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 239 pages

Here is an appealing title that is marked with insight and wit, sure to spur you to make certain decisions before it’s too late. What could be more creative than this?

—Simon Rose, MBA ‘06
The secrets to Sardul Singh Gill’s success are simple: hard work, perseverance and moderation. All are lessons he learned from his father, Bhan Singh Gill, an immigrant from India’s Punjab region, who raised a family on Vancouver Island during the Great Depression.

His father was also his partner in the first revenue property he purchased – an Esquimalt four-plex bought for $20,000 in 1954. “I was going to go and buy a car. He said that a car could be bought any time.” Gill recalls. Bhan Singh Gill did find work in mills up and down the island, including at Paldi, a Sikh community near Lake Cowichan.

In 1939, the family moved back to Victoria, where Gill’s father worked at various sawmills, then in business around the Victoria waterfront. The younger Gill also toiled at those mills while at college and university.

Gill’s Victoria High School guidance counsellor thought the mills would be his future and advised him against pursuing university because of his “background.” But Gill rejected that advice and instead listened to his father, who encouraged his academic pursuits.

“He thinking was this: get your education and if you can’t use it somewhere you can always go back to what you’re doing,” he says.

Gill subsequently earned his certified general accountant designation and pursued a 30-year career as an auditor with the federal government. In his spare time, he slowly and steadily built a large portfolio of properties through his holding company, Gill-AM Investments Ltd.

In 1955, about the same time that Gill began buying real estate, he got married. He and his wife, Amar Kaur Gill, who died in 2009 after a long battle with cancer, had four children: sons Kevin Singh Gill, Robin Singh Gill, and Stephen Singh Gill, and a daughter, Amir Kaur Gill.

Kevin and Amir are both UVic graduates. That Gill and his children were able to pursue higher education is evidence of the changes his father, a devout man who was a founder of Victoria’s Sikh temple, could see beginning to happen back in the 1940s.

“Everything is moving forward,” Gill says. “I think there is subtle racism. It’s still there. I’m not going to deny the fact … but it’s changing, for the better, much better.”

Funding Futures

By Cristy Hartman

The funding model for post-secondary institutions in Canada has changed dramatically in the last 25 years. In the ‘80s, universities received 84 per cent of their operating funds from the provincial and federal governments. By 2011, this had been reduced to 66 per cent. Yet universities face increasing costs, more demand for student funding and greater need for infrastructure, as well as an increasingly competitive marketplace.

So what’s a university to do? Institutions are relying more and more on community support. Symbiotic relationships are developing between businesses and universities.

Alumni and members of the local community are also stepping in to support their alma maters. In Canada, endowment payouts range from three per cent to 4.5 per cent in perpetuity. If a university receives a generous $5-million gift, it means, on average, that $200,000 is available to spend each year. Even small donations over many years can add significantly to endowments. As university endowments continue to grow, so does the amount of base funding available each year.

This funding model is the future of Canadian universities. The current challenge is to build endowment levels quickly enough to meet the demands of operating budgets. But there’s no question that alumni and businesses are playing an increasingly important role in meeting that challenge.

You have the ability to identify opportunities

As a UVic grad and entrepreneur, you have the ability to identify business opportunities for Victoria where others can’t. Together, we can showcase your business as well as your university city to your associates, partners and clients worldwide. Let’s explore opportunities to connect your business expertise with our conference expertise.


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GIVING BACK

Parents honoured with $5-million gift to Gustavson

By Keith Norbury

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It’s not easy out there for aspiring writers. The publishing business is a tightly guarded empire that doesn’t easily allow newcomers into the fold. But author Bennett Coles (MBA ’07), one part military man, one part artist and one part entrepreneur, has managed to breach the industry’s walls with his new novel, Virtues of War—overseeing the entire development of the book, from writing to packaging, marketing and distribution.

For the past 20 years Coles has been writing novels, novellas and short stories about far-flung galaxies. Virtues of War, released earlier this year, couples his military background with his penchant for sci-fi, “taking naval warfare and putting it into space,” as he describes it. Set aboard the fast-attack craft Rapier, the story follows rookie soldiers as they grapple with the physical and psychological demands of battle and war zones, where it’s often difficult to tell who’s in the right—and tough decisions have to be made.

At the core of all Coles’ stories are richly developed characters, composites based on people Coles met and served with during his 15 years with the Canadian Navy. He says that creating complex, realistic characters—“people you think you could actually know”—is what’s most important to him. “I want to make sure my tactics are as good as Tom Clancy’s and my science as good as Arthur C. Clarke’s, but those are actually just side things; the characters are what it’s all about,” he says.

Creating the novel was no easy feat. Writing over the course of three years, after his retirement from the military in 2005, Coles devoted himself to creating his opus while balancing his MBA studies, subsequent career in marketing and active family life with his wife and two young sons. He engaged many on his journey, from a half-dozen test readers to an editor, and spent many hours rewriting until it was ready. “No author can objectively judge their writing. No matter how you publish your work, you need a professional editor to give you honest feedback,” Coles says. “It feels like getting kicked in the stomach when you get that criticism, but when you step back, you can see that they are right and you take it and make improvements to your work. There were amazing passages, ones I loved in Virtues, that I edited out because their absence made the piece, as a whole, stronger.”

Armed with his completed manuscript, Coles began approaching literary agents to represent him. The speed with which the rejections came left him cold. “They responded so quickly, it was clear they hadn’t even read my proposal,” he says. Just when his resolve was waning, he got a celebrity endorsement, from established science fiction and mystery
author Mary Rosenblum, who had been the instructor for a writing course he took several years before and who strongly believed in his work. “Ben’s strengths as a storyteller are his rich characterization, his very solid sense of the ‘good story’ and a vivid and descriptive storytelling style that brings the world to three-dimensional life for the readers,” says Rosenblum. “The richness, the reality of his world and his people make this book stand out from the ranks of space adventure and military SF.” Impressed, she asked her own agent to give the fledgling writer a shot. The response? The risk was too high. Coles was an unknown, without an established fan base to guarantee sales. There was little appetite to take a chance—especially at a time when publishing, like all sectors, was struggling in an economic downturn. It was another blow. If an award-winning writer can’t get you an audience with her own agent, what do you do next?

At this point most people would pack up, accept defeat and go home. But Coles is military trained. With an MBA. His kit bag is packed with skills hard-won in the boardroom and on tours of duty in the Middle East, including a stint in south Lebanon as a UN Peacemaker. This is a guy who doesn’t back down. So he began to investigate independent publishing. Initially, he thought he had but one option: sign with a print-on-demand publishing company. The advantage of this approach would have been not spending a lot of money on printing—copies are only printed when customers request them. But there were also drawbacks. Sure, he didn’t risk having a lot of unsold product lying around, but he would have to give up control of the production and marketing, and split royalties. After all of his hard work, a 10 per cent royalty on the sale of each book seemed like a poor reward. A radical idea occurred to him: what if he kept full control of his product, took it to market himself and let the public decide whether they liked it or not?

That’s when Promontory Press was born. Coles became his own publisher. By producing Virtues of War under his own imprint he receives full royalties, and he’s able to control the look of the final product and market it in a way that resonates with the audience he’s trying to attract. The long-term rewards looking to be on national shelves by Christmas. He also sells e-book versions of his novel through various distributors, giving him access to the international market.

Coles isn’t proprietary about his model of publishing. Once a month, he holds workshops in the Lower Mainland to share his experience with fellow authors. “If you have empowered authors you get a better publishing industry, and with a better publishing industry, the public gets better reads,” he says.

But it’s not all business for Coles, who donates a portion of the proceeds of each book purchase to War Child Canada, a non-profit organization that aids children in war-torn areas. “I saw a lot of things on duty,” Coles says, “and the hardest is when you see kids in a horrible environment. I have kids myself. It really hits home.” It’s a partnership Coles is particularly proud of, and that he plans to carry forward with future works. “It’s a chance to still help improve conditions in places I toured,” he says.

Coles is also busy penning a sequel to Virtues of War that he hopes to release in fall of 2012. And he recently got another celebrity endorsement, in the form of a tweet, from none other than Gene Simmons of the band Kiss: “Shannon and I met Canadian military heroes for dinner. Urge you to check out Virtues of War by Bennett Coles.” When you get the thumbs-up from Kiss, you know cult status is just a warp jump away. 

“If you want to be successful, you need to be professional at every level of your production.”
I has shown,” says Dr. Steve Tax, Service Management Program having married it to a service systems approach. “Research Specialization takes a unique approach to design thinking, brains—if it’s there at all. if it occupies some undisclosed space on the right side of our creative thinking is a slippery topic. It tends to make people design practicum elective. The problem is, unlike finance, in addition to traditional subjects such as finance. For schools are struggling with exactly how to teach innovation in the past 10 years, known for innovation: the idea is to get out there and fail often; don’t sit and wait for inspiration to strike. It is better to have enough ideas for some of them to be wrong, than to be always right by having no ideas at all. —Edward de Bono, author

It is better to have enough ideas for some of them to be wrong, than to be always right by having no ideas at all.

—Edward de Bono, author

By Brad Buie

Incubating ideas for service management success

In the past 10 years, creativity and design thinking have become de rigueur in business schools. The trend has been spurred by the success of global design firms—such as IDEO—which have helped hundreds of private and public sector organizations grow through what IDEO terms a “human-centred, design-based approach.”

Seeing this need for organizations to innovate, business schools are struggling with exactly how to teach innovation in addition to traditional subjects such as finance. For example, the Rotman School of Management MBA has a design practicum elective. The problem is, unlike finance, creative thinking is a slippery topic. It tends to make people feel it’s not easily tapped; as if it occupies some undisclosed space on the right side of our brains—if it’s there at all.

The Gustavson School of Business Service Management Specialization takes a unique approach to design thinking, having married it to a service systems approach. “Research has shown,” says Dr. Steve Tax, Service Management Program champion, “that the number-one reason for service failure is poor design.” Students specializing in service management learn to remedy these problems through a hybrid approach called service design thinking.

Traditional design thinking focuses on the customer experience: for example, software companies have been wrapping their best minds around how users interface with touch-only tablets and smart phones. However, service design thinking incorporates the entire service system in an integrated blueprint that, instead of detailing physical structures, maps the transactions constituting the service delivery process. When the students put the process to paper, they were able to effectively identify fail points in the service. They also looked at the physical layout to determine its physiological, psychological and emotional effects on users. The MBA team came up with a simple yet elegant solution. “We suggested adding signage, but also tilting the storage tray a bit more and placing it under direct lighting so that the shiny reflective glasses were visible from a distance.”

This is a typical IDEO approach. “It’s structured brainstorming,” says Tax. “When we’re working in teams, each of us tends to believe we have the best ideas. We carry a psychological bias. To get around that, we request that the teams defer judgment and instead build on each others’ ideas, seek out the unexpected and really go for quantity.”

Historically, quantity is a tried and true method of getting to quality. Some say artists such as Da Vinci and Picasso were not necessarily more talented than their contemporaries, but they produced more. This has influenced the culture of organizations known for innovation: the idea is to get out there and fail often, don’t wait and wait for inspiration to strike. The process never quite ends. Dr. Liana Victorino, assistant professor in the service specialization, emphasizes continual improvement. She applies statistical analysis and other quality management tools to support effective service design, such as blueprinting and layout—not necessarily in a linear fashion and sometimes repeatedly. They may be surprised by the eloquence of their solutions and creativity they didn’t know they had.

Though ask Tax about creativity and he appears bemused. “We don’t really speak about having creativity as a characteristic. Creativity is more the end result of a process or else is the process itself,” he says.

This is certainly true of the Service Management Specialization and its team of instructors. “I used to think creativity was completely unrestricted thinking—fun, but not very practical,” says Bassi. “Service management has provided me with tools that help me focus creativity to solve real problems.”

By Design

PROTECTING AND GROWING YOUR REAL ESTATE WEALTH

PETER B. GUSTAVSON SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
In The Creativity Question, Business Class chats with faculty, alumni, students and friends about igniting their inspiration.

Dr. Ali Dastmalchian
Dean
Creative outlet: Toy stores.
Most creative moment: The creation of the Master of Global Business program Workplace Skills Coning lunch with Elango and Tim Craig, who was strumming on his ever-present guitar. We were talking about how graduate business programs could be and we thought, “Why don’t we do that?”
When I was six I wanted to be: A professional soccer player.
Person I find most creative: Jamie Oliver, Edward de Bono, Leonardo Da Vinci, a great thinker, inventor and artist.
My go-to creative problem-solving strategy: Ask questions (lots!).
Creativity: inherent or taught? A bit of both—but it’s really about how you use the creative side of the brain to best advantage. Everyone is born with creative instincts to best advantage. Everyone is born with creative abilities (hard-wired in every human brain), but the imaginative or creative side of the brain must be exercised and disciplined just like the rational side.

Andrew Laycock
BCom Student
Most creative moment: A concept for recycling beer bottle caps in the Czech Republic for the sustainability portion of orientation last year. Cohort 4 winners!
When I was six I wanted to be: A marine biologist.
My go-to creative problem-solving strategy: Try something new every time. It may be more difficult but it allows for creativity and a lot more fun. Don’t always go back to things that have worked in the past.

Dr. Sarah J. Blackstone
Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts
Creative outlet: Bird photography.
Most creative moment: Developing our course, “The Creative Being,” which was designed to help fine arts students understand what it is to be creative, and to help students from other disciplines become more comfortable with their own creativity, without worrying about whether they have artistic talent.
When I was six I wanted to be: A forest ranger.
Person I find most creative: Jamies Oliver, Edward de Bono, Steve Jobs and Charles Handy.
My go-to creative problem-solving strategy: When I return to the problem, I almost always find I have something entirely unrelated to what was in mind and waking up with a solution.

Sheryl Karras
Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs
Creative outlet: Plotting, planning and thinking while running.
Most creative moment: The birth of the Workplace Skills Conference. When I was six I wanted to be: A ballerina.
I’d like to invent/create: A space that fosters the development and growth of altruistic business ideas.

Eric Jordan
BFA ’93
President, Premier’s Technology Council
Creative outlet: Doing art projects with my kids.
When I was six I wanted to be: A director of movies with lots of special effects.
My go-to creative problem-solving strategy: Meditation. I try to meditate for 25 minutes every day and I find that it really helps me to bring a clear perspective to a problem.

Trait that makes me innovative: Humour.
I’d like to invent/create: A brewery and beer company that focuses solely on different fruit beers brewed with different methods and styles of ales and lagers.

Lesley Bidlake
BCom ’08
Senior Manager, Marketing
Creative outlet: Photography.
When I was six I wanted to be: A boss!
My go-to creative problem-solving strategy: Grabbing a coffee and locking myself in my office. Works every time.

Keri Greenidge
(MBA ’09)
Choir Tour Co-ordinator
Creative outlet: The beach or going to sleep with a particular thought in mind and waking up with a solution.
When I was six I wanted to be: A nurse.

My go-to creative problem-solving strategy: A notepad and a quiet spot.

Creativity: inherent or taught? A bit of both—it’s really about how unconventional your approach to life and problems is.
I’d like to invent/create: A device that can allow people to beam/transport themselves from one place to another at the speed of light. Just like on Star Trek! In the next year I’d like to master: Public speaking and curbing the urge for spontaneous shopping sprees!

Trait that makes me innovative: Curiosity and being open-minded.
I’d like to invent/create: A concept for recycling beer bottle caps in the Czech Republic for the sustainability portion of orientation last year. Cohort 4 winners!

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visit new places and try new things.

I love to travel, whether good or bad. You also have to not be afraid to fail. If you must have some guts to put yourself out there with ideas you have to say outdoor adventures are my true outlet.

Pat Elemans
Assistant Dean
Creative outlet: Cooking
When I was six I wanted to be: A nurse
Person I find most creative: Steve Jobs.
My go-to creative problem-solving strategy: Talking with my team, talking with others to share the problem and get ideas, going for a run, cycling or working out.

Trait that makes me innovative: I think confidence plays a big role in innovation. You have to have some guts to put yourself out there with ideas (whether good or bad). You also have to not be afraid to fail. If you fail, you still have to keep your confidence in order to learn from the experience, get back up and try again.

My interpersonal skills.

Sashie Steenstra
Employment Strategist
Favourite mistake: Taking my two-year-old and five-year-old by myself halfway around the world for vacation! It was tricky, but worth it! I could win The Amazing Race now.

David Tapp
Account Executive
Creative outlet: I work in an advertising agency, so obviously that as a good outlet on a professional level. But I would have to say outdoor adventures are my true outlet.

Most creative outlet: Truly original ideas are quite hard to come by unless it’s through groundbreaking innovation. A lot of what I do is situational “remixing” and tweaking of ideas that have proven to be successful for others and adapting them using critical thinking about how an audience will engage with the creative as it relates to a different industry or business.

When I was six I wanted to be: A fire hydrant.

Seriously—not a firefighter. A fire hydrant.

My go-to creative problem-solving strategy: Long showers. Slightly odd I know, but my most innovative solutions come from some eureka moment I have while taking a shower!

Trait that makes me innovative: Persistence. I’d like to invent/create: Some lcd that would appeal to tween girls—I’d be rich!

Heather Ranson
Senior Instructor
Most creative moment: Leaving my role as MBA Marketing Manager and taking on the role of associate director of the CSS. It’s giving me the opportunity to meet some great people and work with all the Gustavson students instead of just one program.

When I was six I wanted to be: A nurse who specializes in wolf sites.

Person I find most creative: Children in general. My sons have amazing imaginations. They often go off on “what if” tangents and it is fascinating to see where they end up!

Trait that makes me innovative: Stubbornness.

Connor Edwards
BCom ‘11
Creative outlet: Fresh air and a quick walk outside.

When I was six I wanted to be: A fighter pilot—I’m a huge Top Gun fan!

I’m currently travelling in Europe, so I’d love to create an app that lets you take a picture of text and then translates it for you!

On the flip side, I used to think of creativity in a limited, narrow sense as artistic creativity,” says MacDonald. “If I wasn’t drawing or making stuff, I wasn’t being creative. But with advertising, even on the business side, I’ve seen how you get to be really creative, conceptualizing campaigns, coming up with communications ideas … that’s a whole different kind of creativity that I’m finding really inspiring.”

By Greg Pratt

Creativity’s Not Dead

BCom Dan MacDonald’s edgy outlook inks graphic-clothing success

By Greg Pratt

Dan MacDonald (BCom ’10) has learned a lot about creativity since his time at UVic, when he was an ambitious business student toying with the idea of starting his own clothing line. And he gained this knowledge from the most unlikely of sources.

“Thanks in large part to an internship at Vancouver ad agency DDB Canada, MacDonald now realizes that it’s possible to flex his creative muscles in one of the areas the entrepreneurial artist fears the most: advertising.”

“I used to think of creativity in a limited, narrow sense as artistic creativity,” says MacDonald. “If I wasn’t drawing or making stuff, I wasn’t being creative. But with advertising, even on the business side, I’ve seen how you get to be really creative, conceptualizing campaigns, coming up with communications ideas … that’s a whole different kind of creativity that I’m finding really inspiring.”

The idea for Dead Celebrities, MacDonald’s clothing line, came about after he got an internship, at age 17, at US comic company Top Cow Productions, with legendary comic publisher and artist Marc Silvestri. The internship led with legendary comic publisher and artist Marc Silvestri. The internship led

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So he kept drawing. Eventually he put those drawings onto T-shirts and started selling them online, and Dead Celebrities clothing was born. There’s no question that he was creative back then. But it’s what he’s learned since that’s truly radical.

“As an artist, you don’t really think about whether or not people will like your stuff, you just have to express yourself and if some people like it, then awesome, and if they don’t, you don’t really care,” he says. “As an entrepreneur, it’s the other way around—you find a need in the marketplace and create something to satisfy that particular need.”

In fact, a lot of MacDonald’s motivation.

a fire hydrant.

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I grew up on the Prairies and have spent nights in the Himalayas, but in few other places have I seen stars this bright. My pulse spikes as a dog’s vicious bark rapidly approaches. It’s 4:30 a.m.; I expected roosters. After an hour workdays. In an uncharacteristic leap of faith I thought, “If they can do it, why can’t I?”

For the final co-op term of my BCom degree, I secured a volunteer placement in rural Guatemala working on a community tourism project. I was headed to the Mayan highlands to help the staff of Corazón del Bosque (“Heart of the Forest”) restaurant improve its client services. The position wouldn’t come with the paycheque of a second co-op stint with KPMG, but you can only have so many adventures following your introduction to Lucia, Cristalle-Bellina, Gladys—and Rebecca, it was immediately apparent that one of these things was not like the others. I was a 21-year-old gringo from the native K’iche’ dialect, boasted a combined total of 17 kids and had visited less of Guatemala in their lifetime than I had seen since my arrival a week earlier. We had almost nothing in common and it showed. Their reactions to my arrival ranged from embarrassed chuckles to skeptical frowns. I knew I needed to find a way to earn their trust and respect.

On my first Friday at the park, an opportunity presented itself. That morning, I was informed that a group of volunteers from Minnesota would be staying the following week. Each day, the ladies would serve them a buffet-style breakfast at 7 a.m. and dinner around 8 p.m. Unfortunately, the idea of split shifts had yet to make its way to Guatemala and the national labour board (if it existed) was not about to balk at 17-hour workdays. In an uncharacteristic leap of faith I thought, “If they can do it, why can’t I?”

So, I arrived that Monday morning bundled up for the January mountain chill. When I arrived, I opened the kitchen side door to see a look of amused surprise on Cristalle-Bellina’s face. I’ll never know if her grin was due to the fact that I had actually shown up, or the way my MEC head lamp looked perched on my ski toque.

I asked how I could help prepare breakfast. No response. I found a knife and joined Lucia cutting red peppers. In broken Spanish I asked questions about her family and the park. She provided responses, but nothing close to a conversation.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, I remained confident that it wasn’t because they didn’t like me that they weren’t forthcoming with their friendship, only that they were unsure what to make of me. Fair enough.

As the sun rose, I switched from vegetable chopping to tortilla-making. These ladies were mechanical. I was horrible. And they loved it. As I battled to shape the dough, the shy giggles slowly evolved into laughter. With a smile and a boost of concentration, I tried again to round the edges of the wet maize. Fail. My face turned bright red even before the disc smacked the tile floor. The women erupted in uncontrollable howls and I could do nothing but smile and laugh. I viewed it as a small victory.

For the remainder of the week I continued to arrive at 5 a.m. and stumble home exhausted after 10 p.m. By Friday, I could barely keep my eyes open, but I began to see a small improvement in my interactions with the women.

The remainder of my three months at Corazón del Bosque was truly eye opening. I learned that the greater the challenge, the stronger the bonds you form. By the end of my co-op term, I was very set to leave.

Looking back now, I like to think that I wasn’t the only one who emerged better off from the experience. Besides the unintentional entertainment I provided at times, I believe my kitchen ladies had their own takeaways from our occasional “field trips” to other restaurants, the stories we shared and the changes I was ultimately able to bring about in the restaurant.

Este bosque tiene un lugar especial en mi corazón.
Drew Zimmerman, Cam MaxQueen, Taylor Love, BCom, and Bear Johal, BA, have been working hard since finishing their degrees to plan the Top Guns Charity Road Trip. Top Guns is a student-based charity that travelled across Canada this September to raise money and awareness for Breast Cancer Prevention. The charity sells sunglasses and raises money through 25 cities and visited 15 universities.

“Top Guns was started by three friends in 2004,” says Bear Johal, Bear Johal, Bear Johal. “It’s a group of students who have come together to raise money and awareness for breast cancer prevention.”

The charity is a non-profit organization that was founded in 2004 by three students who were inspired to raise money and awareness for breast cancer prevention. The charity has grown in size and scope, raising funds and awareness in 25 cities and 15 universities across Canada in 2011.

By raising money through various events and initiatives, Top Guns aims to support breast cancer research and raise awareness about the importance of early detection and treatment. The charity also offers education and support services for those affected by breast cancer.

During their road trip, Top Guns visited a variety of cities and universities, raising funds and generating awareness about breast cancer prevention. The charity is continually expanding its reach and impact, with the goal of making a positive difference in the lives of those affected by breast cancer.
A Healing Journey

For Amanda Ferriss (BCom ’08), a post-graduation trip was much more than a holiday, and her experiences are now shaping the next phase of her life. Two weeks after graduating, Ferriss found herself in the Congo city of Goma, volunteering in a hospital with a local hospital. For Ferriss, who served as a “Jill of all trades,” teaching English and providing Excel training to local department heads of the organization, teaching at the hospital, organizing swimming lessons and spending time with patients in the hospital. “One day we were in lockdown, with gunfire in the streets from a civil uprising. It is very, very different than life here.”

After leaving Goma, Ferriss spent the rest of the year travelling in Africa, Australia and New Zealand, stopping only to work for long enough to pay for the next leg of her journey.

Upon returning to Canada she landed in real estate sales. But after her African experience, it didn’t feel like the right fit. “It was a really good job, but not that fulfilling,” she says. “I’d like to work in human rights, specifically child exploitation and human trafficking, and learn on a larger scale how to go about making lasting and effective change.”

So Ferriss is putting her dream into action. She has written her law school admission test (LSAT) and has applications in the mail, hoping for UVic Law.

In the upcoming spring issue of Business Class magazine, we are offering you the chance to do just that. Our Alumni Classified section will give you the opportunity to promote your business with a full colour display advertisement. Look like the right fit for your business? Contact Jennifer Hanley at Canada Wide Media Ltd. today at 604.639.3796 or jhanley@canadawide.com.

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Business Class magazine reaches a dynamic group of UVic Faculty of Business grads, faculty, staff, students and members of the business community twice a year! In the upcoming spring issue of Business Class magazine, we are offering you the chance to do just that. Our Alumni Classified section will give you the opportunity to promote your business with a full colour display advertisement. Look like the right fit for your business? Contact Jennifer Hanley at Canada Wide Media Ltd. today at 604.639.3796 or jhanley@canadawide.com.

* Special rate for alumni

Recentley we talked to Matt Hall, Gustavson Executive-in-Residence, retired CEO of Nestle UK’s Food and Beverage Division and former senior vice-president of global marketing and sales for Nestle Switzerland, about marketing and careers in business. Read on for a few inside secrets.

BC: You’ve had success with ad campaigns targeted to 18- to 30-year-olds. Any tips on how to speak to this market segment?

MH: This age group doesn’t do well in focus groups and doesn’t fill out surveys, so a lot of the market research on them is observational—setting up an environment (like a pub) where they engage with the product and watching to see what they do. Another way to engage them is to use social networking communities—asking them to pick the next flavour or variety of a product. Bottom line! Traditional media is becoming a less and less viable option for this group, so companies need to find ways to make sure they hire youthful employees who can engage and watch the changes and trends with strategies and trends with strategies. And companies need to be willing to implement those employees’ ideas.

BC: What’s your opinion on the messaging around green products? What should the focus be when marketing them?

MH: Companies need to be serious about what they say. They need to be credible with their target audience. There can’t be any greenwashing; they need to be transparent. In the next five years, sustainability will become part of the hygiene of the business—as important as product safety. Consumers want to know where their products are manufactured and sourced. Is it fair trade? Was it made by child labourers? Companies will need to address these concerns in their handling of sustainability issues.

BC: Do you have a favourite business blunder you’d like to share with us?

MH: Yes, and my advice is to never waste a good mistake! In my case, when I was working in sales for Nestle in Canada, we outsourced the sales force to a third party, laying off 200 employees. It was apparent, very early on, that this was a mistake. Our customer relationships suffered, in large part due to the high turnover rate at the third-party company. A year and a half after the outsourcing, we brought the sales team back in-house and our sales and customer relationships greatly improved, exceeding pre-layoff levels.

BC: You were part of an initiative to redevelop products to make them more nutritious. Can you talk about this process?

MH: The toughest thing in the food business is that when you make something more nutritious, you lose taste. Consumers are concerned about what they put in their mouths, but they want it to taste good. At Nestle, our goal was to beat our competitors on taste and have one nutritional advantage over them, whether it be less fat, less salt, etc. The food industry is encountering more and more government regulation with regard to the types of benefits companies can claim about their food products. You can show on paper the benefits of your product, but your product wants more in-depth, clinical trial type studies before allowing these kinds of claims to appear on food packaging.

BC: You spent much of your career working internationally. What advice would you give aspiring business students who want to work for a large international company?

MH: It’s very important for you to know, before you embark on a career in international business, that it’s the right choice for you and your family. Make sure you choose a company that has a good reputation wherever it does business, and that you’re passionate about. You should try to be flexible with your assignments and locations—it shows you can handle challenges and change. And be sure to learn about different business practices when you are visiting new places in order to avoid cultural mistakes.
Doctor or Manager?

Researcher delves into health-care decision-making

By Shazia Karmali

There has always been tension between managers and physicians. This tension stems, in part, from differences in the way managers and physicians are trained and socialized into their respective professions. For physicians, the doctor-patient relationship and the quality of care and treatment are paramount. The physician’s ultimate goal is to provide medically necessary services, regardless of cost. Managers, on the other hand, tend to view patients as consumers of a service, with quality being determined by market forces and the ultimate goal being to provide effective and efficient services.

As health-care expenditures steadily rise, there is a push for health systems around the world to be more rational and business-like. Many physicians are finding themselves leaving clinical roles in the health-care system. Yet these roles changes are seldom accompanied by management training, and physicians are expected to make decisions. The next step will be to empirically test for differences in decision-making between these two groups of executives.

One outcome of this is the tendency to make decisions autonomously, based on the specialized knowledge they have acquired in their extensive medical training. Evidence suggests that of all medical professionals, physicians tend to have the lowest propensity for consultation and collaboration across occupational boundaries. Managers, on the other hand, are trained explicitly to take context into consideration when making decisions and to rely on general problem-solving skills. They seldom require more than a general understanding of a managerial issue.

My research proposes that physicians in senior management roles differ in their approach to strategic decision-making from senior managers who are not trained as physicians. I use a concept from strategic decision-making research called “comprehensiveness,” or the extent to which an organization attempts to be exhaustive and inclusive in making and integrating strategic decisions. It’s also a measure of rationality. As the Canadian health-care system attempts to rationalize health services to contain increasing costs, comprehensiveness is an ever more relevant measure for effective decision-making.

Of course, comprehensiveness is counter to how experienced physicians are expected to make decisions. The more comprehensive (or exhaustive and inclusive) a physician is in his or her decision-making, the less experienced and confident he or she appears to be. By extension, physician executives are less likely to be comprehensive in their decision-making than non-physician executives. Also, teams led by physician executives are likely to alter their decision-making strategies to suit those of the physician executive, rather than the physician altering his or her decision-making approach to align with existing organizational practices.

For now, my propositions are based on theoretical and conceptual arguments. The next step will be to empirically test for differences in decision-making between these two groups of executives. Differences in how physicians and managers are trained and socialized into their respective careers suggest potential for variances in their strategic decision-making approaches. This research could have significant implications for a number of critical issues that the health-care system currently faces; for example, the most effective ways to train physician executives. It may also contribute to explaining the relative lack of success physicians and managers are finding themselves leaving clinical roles in the health-care system. Yet these roles changes are seldom accompanied by management training, and physicians are expected to make decisions. The next step will be to empirically test for differences in decision-making between these two groups of executives.

I nicknamed my father MacGyver when I was a little girl because he could look at any problem and find an imaginative solution. With spare parts and tools he could whip up anything. He made a T-ball stand from a radiator hose, a few screws and an old board and built my brother and me our first motorcycle from scrap car parts. My parents created a backyard art gallery with sculptures, fountains, chimes and flower pots—all made from cool stuff they found or rescued. On a recent trip home, I realized that the environment in which I was raised had completely permeated my creative process.

By Leanne Cadden, BCom ’05

Resourcefulness is a form of imagination that spurs creativity. It is an ability to see and think differently—a kind of genius has to happen, because there is no other option and nothing to lose. Resourcefulness is a form of imagination that spurs in a time of difficulty, deficiency or struggle and propels our craft, art or business into greatness. In the face of limited resources, that push of genius has to happen, because there is no other option and nothing to lose.

Business today is being transformed in much the same fashion by the creative classes. Armed with laptops and limited resources, creative leaders are using their ideas and ingenuity to develop companies, products and brands that catapult them to success. But audiences are becoming more creative, too. So a business’s success depends on the innovation and resourcefulness of creative minds internally, as well as creative individuals understanding you, your products and your services externally.

As a business leader in today’s economy, if you don’t understand the creative classes and how they think, it will hurt your bottom line. Internally, you won’t understand who your employees are or their optimal working environment. Externally, you just won’t understand your audience. If you can’t relate to the needs and desires of the creative class, you might need to take a few lessons from my dad!
Nearly a decade ago, Research in Motion (RIM), the pride of Waterloo, introduced the revolutionary BlackBerry smart phone. Everyone important had it and everyone who wanted to be important needed it. It became known as the “crackberry” to celebrities and business people alike. RIM was the patriarch of an industry and an icon of the tech world. And until last year, it was the top producer of smart phones in the world. Then “it” happened—Apple’s iPhone, Google’s Android platform and a wave of new smart phone entrants crowded the marketplace.

As in any industry, technology companies are in constant, high-stakes competition with others that offer similar products and services. These companies need to be able to respond—nay, to anticipate—market demands to stay at the head of the pack. Yet failure to adapt is an inherent flaw in big-business DNA, one that stifles innovation with every percentage increase in market capitalization. Let’s face it, it’s not easy for a company to turn on a dime and switch from revenue-producing products to unproven ideas. Such shifts are not always good for shareholders’ interests. But they’re critical to survival.

Remember, the default pace of innovation is overdrive. Looking back, video did kill the radio star, and so did the PC.

PCs consolidated office processes, destroying mainframe and workstation companies. Fast-forward to the Internet era and we see that e-commerce has been killing off scores of retailers. Companies such as Netflix have been instrumental in consolidating the rental movie industry. Facebook and the other social media kings have been putting the almighty Google on its heels. (With more than 750 million users, Facebook overtook Google as the most visited website last year.) Failure to “imagineer” is a company’s death knell. Technology companies in particular have to be very careful that efficiency and profitability don’t come at the cost of innovation and creativity. They must maintain focus and continue to drive innovation. Even as shareholders play a bigger role in the business, tech giants need to remember their creative roots.

They also need to listen to the consumer and realize the end game before the competition. In the case of smart phones, the end game was always to get smarter—it’s just that not everybody could see it. For consumers, the silver lining is that in the race to innovation, we get to enjoy the fruits of these companies’ creative labour. And with RIM, Apple and Google on the scene, we’re in for an exciting ride.
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