

# CREATE YOUR PERFECT FUTURE

by Wessel Ebersohn

*Kobus Neethling on how creativity translates into business success*

**Creativity** is available to everyone. This is the teaching of Kobus Neethling, internationally revered creativity expert and the only non-American ever to receive the The International Who's Who of Intellectuals Award.

To Neethling, creativity is not just the preserve of poets or composers, but is available to all of us in whatever we do. The core of creativity is simply looking at the world with fresh eyes. The creative person has a new perspective on life. Things that were once impossible, are now possible. It is this new thinking that has a life-changing effect on those who take hold of it.

Very few South Africans have had the positive effect on this country that Neethling has had. Week after week, at Neethling's Place near Bela Bela, he trains groups of South Africans to be creative. His students range from corporate leaders and executives to civil society workers, teachers, civil servants and anyone else seeking to grow as a person.

Neethling's work extends far beyond our borders, regularly taking him to North America, Europe and other continents. From

## SIMPLE CREATIVITY

Creativity can come in many forms. The story is told that NASA engineers spent many hours trying to design a pen that could function in the weightlessness of space. They had almost given up on the task as being so time-wasting for something that promised such small rewards, when they discovered that the Russians had the answer to the problem. They were using a pencil. •



Kobus Neethling

personal experience, this observer can testify that almost everyone leaves Neethling's Place inspired to get the very best out of themselves, both in business and in their personal lives. In fact, those who attend the Neethling Group courses come away being better and more useful people.

There are no short cuts in Neethling's teaching. The absolute first step in developing a creative state of mind is to take responsibility for yourself. "You can't blame anyone else for your thinking," he says. "Negativity of any sort is dangerous. It spreads like wildfire through an organisation. It just cannot be allowed. A problem-oriented brain cannot be creative."

It is only the power of your thinking that can take you from negativity to creativity. "Negativity is an unnatural state. No one has to be stuck there."

## NEGATIVITY IS A LEARNT HABIT, BUT THE CYCLE CAN BE BROKEN

Neethling places thinking into two basic categories, below the line or above the line thinking. But even in these categories, he sees a number of levels through which every person can progress towards becoming more creative.

Negativity being an unnatural state, all four below-the-line levels should never be allowed into our lives. At the very bottom, torment and anguish are the most destructive of all, sometimes driving the

sufferer to suicide. One step higher, paralysis and indifference are less directly destructive, but the person inflicted by this state still seems helpless to break free. Another step up, negativity and pessimism remain obstructive in the sense that, while the mind sees no hope in the future, nothing can be achieved.

The next step upward is the most significant step of all. To achieve it the person has to cross the breakthrough line between negativity and creativity. In Neethling's own words, "The voyage to wisdom is the journey from below the line thinking to above the line thinking. Once we allow below the line thinking to take hold in our lives, our thinking becomes conditioned and boxed in."

Once we start responding negatively to issues, no matter how insignificant, we allow ourselves to be conditioned to acting in this way. We react to people, ideas and change in the same negative way. Soon everything brings out a negative response from us. We lock in our power instead of setting it free to reach our full potential. On the other hand, the above the line thinker knows:

- Your thinking does not depend on your circumstances – it is your choice.
- Blaming others and your circumstances for your discontent is giving up your freedom of choice. You are being controlled instead of being in control.

## THE BEHAVIOUR CHAIN

Everything begins with a trigger. Every change in life begins with the incident that sets things going. It may be a marriage, the birth of a child, a serious accident, reading the right book at the moment you need it most, or it may be attending a course or even a lecture. Something has to act as the trigger.

The trigger leads to a change in thinking. Suddenly your thinking is different to what it once was. You start to believe that things you would never previously have attempted are now possible.

Out of your new thinking a different feeling develops. You have gone beyond intellectual belief to a feeling that makes you a different sort of person. You are not just thinking about a new outlook. Deep within yourself you feel it. Something in you has changed.

But feeling has to lead to behaviour change to be effective. And it does. The way you feel affects fundamentally the way you behave.

Changes in behaviour inevitably have consequences. The person who comes home from work to tackle a project of any sort will find a different result to the one who drinks four beers in front of the television, then falls asleep. •

*"To have a great idea, first have a lot of ideas" – Thomas Edison*

*"Creativity is not the finding of a thing, but making something out of it" – James Russel*

*"Some men look at things the way they are and ask why? I dream of things that are not and ask why not?" – George Bernard Shaw •*

- Your thinking can be changed.
- Below the line thinking and creativity can never go together.
- Negativity is a learnt habit, but the cycle can be broken.
- It is possible to think and live above the line as your habitual state.

**Creativity** is more important in the leader than it is in anyone else in an organisation. “The leader must be aware of what change does to people,” says Neethling.

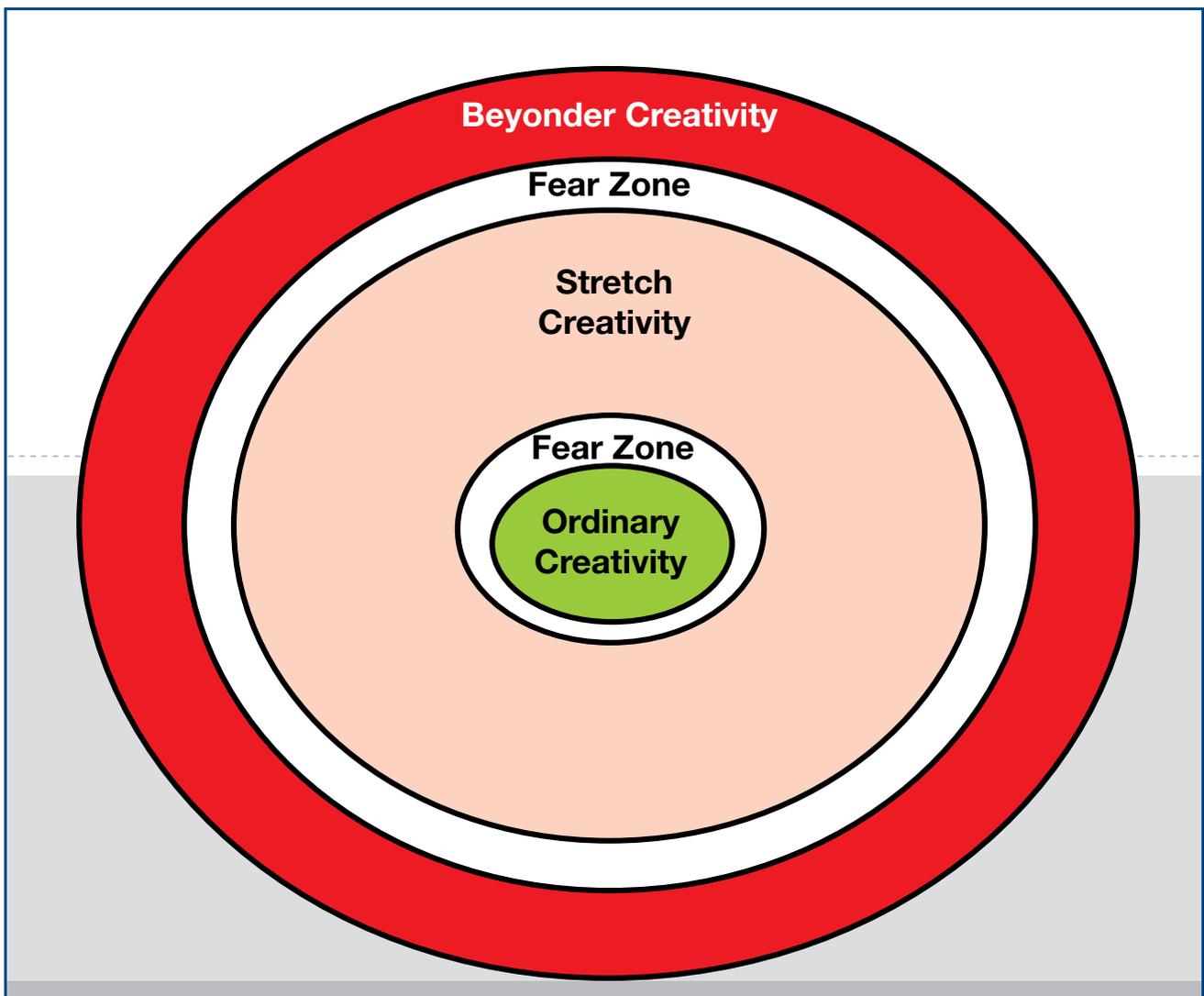
“The leader must see the future first, creatively prepare for it and so pass on energy to his or her followers. In the next six years the most dominant disease in the developed world is going to be depression. Creative leadership will be needed to help individuals and organisations to get past this.”

A core issue in the quest for real creativity is that people like to talk about their problems. “It clogs the mind,” says

Neethling. “Staying absorbed by your problems to the exclusion of solutions prevents us from reaching the true essence of creativity.”

Creativity is important, not just because we have to deal with our own internal challenges, but because the environment in which we live has a profound effect on us. The rapidly changing nature of our environment means that guarantees that were once a part of our lives are no longer effective. Jobs for life have disappeared, pensions shrink as they are subject to inflation and government social grants are under pressure worldwide. “We have to become the creators of our own futures,” says Neethling. “We have to visualise our own dreams and destinations, because once we dream them, we can do them.”

To deal with a rapidly changing environment we need the right tools, insights, attitudes and our eyes on a future destination. We have to accept that we are going to make mistakes and confront serious obstacles, but we need to see them as learning



experiences, not the end of the journey. “The 21st century will not be kind to those who get stuck in their comfort zones,” says Neethling. “To deal with it we need a new kind of creativity, courage and spirituality.”

He teaches that our thinking, emotions and attitudes determine our success, not our circumstances. Only those people who feel they are in control of their thinking and who see their potential as almost limitless will truly succeed in the quest for excellence. “The tools we require in this quest lie within us. They are courage, motivation, creativity, the ability to visualise, whole-brain thinking, vision, perseverance, joy and wisdom.”

*“The significant problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them” – Albert Einstein*

*“Act as if it were impossible to fail”  
– Dorothea Brande*

*“If we really want to live, we’d better start at once to try” – WH Auden*

## THE CREATIVITY ZONES - FROM ORDINARY TO BEYONDER

In Neethling’s view we all fall into one of a number of creativity zones, but are often trapped in one by fear of making a change.

Many people possess a measure of creativity, but it is limited to the everyday zone. This group is made up of useful people who want to make progress, but are trapped by the fear zone that surrounds them. “It’s not necessary to be trapped at the level of negativity or even at the level of ordinary creativity,” says Neethling. “Choosing to be positive in a conscious decision. Clamp down on rubbish language. Talking in a negative, defeatist way is a sure way to stop you from progressing. The way you respond to the world is the factor that programmes your brain.”

The influences that we have to shake off are often the subtle ones that have been affecting us all our lives. In too many school rooms the only voice that is heard is that of the teacher. According to a major American survey, 98% of children are creative when they start school. By the time they are 10 that figure has shrunk to 32%. At university graduation only 2% remain creative.

## KOBUS NEETHLING

- President of the South African Creativity Foundation.
- Holds six degrees including two Masters, a Doctorate and Post-Doctorate in the identification and development of creative behaviour.
- Has written more than 80 books and 9 TV series including a number of international best-sellers.
- Has received 10 International Who’s Who Awards including Personality of the Year (2000), One of 2000 outstanding Scholars of the 20th century (1999: Cambridge England) and The International Who’s Who of Intellectuals Award.
- Received the 1998 International Leadership Award from the Creative Problem Solving Institute, USA.
- Received the first International Creative Genius Award (2004) from the International Genius Academy (USA).
- Developed the largest battery of Whole Brain Instruments in the world (used in 30 countries) including the acclaimed 8-Dimension Brain Model.
- International Silver Screen Award (for a TV episode called Creativity, 2005).
- Co-developer of the Hit TV show “ Out of the Box,” Winner of the 2007 US International Film and Video Festival Silver Screen Award.
- 2008 Recipient of the Excellence in Innovation Award (Mumbai: Feb 2008).
- Worked with national and international sports teams since 1993.

### Talks and training

- Moving from Ordinary to Beyondness (in personal and business)
- A New kind of creativity for a new kind of century
- Using your Whole Brain in the 21st century
- From Creative Problem Solving, to Opportunity Finding to Miracle Making
- The five critical ways to ‘get out of the box’
- How to become 8 times more creative
- The essence of successful creativity
- Creating happiness with your whole brain •

*To learn more about the creativity training offered by the Neethling Group, call 012 460 7822  
or visit [www.kobusneethling.com](http://www.kobusneethling.com)*

Most are still good learners, but they learn only within the paradigms of what they have been taught. Creativity has been conditioned out of us.

Those who break through the first fear barrier to the stretch or exploration zone reach a stage of creativity that is now willing to take risks, to be creative even in uncomfortable circumstances. This creativity is open to new ideas and willing to reject obsolete beliefs.

But even this zone has boundaries that are imposed by fear. Breaking through this barrier gets us into what Neethling calls the “Beyond” zone. “It is at this point that the seemingly impossible becomes possible. Here we have reached a point at which we keep on going despite uncertainty. At this level we completely synergise courage with creativity. We are no longer satisfied with what we see around us. We remain excited and passionate about what is on the other side of the wall.”

The wonder is the Beyond zone is available to all of us. We all possess that hidden core of creativity. S

## SIMPLE CREATIVITY

The Swedish government were unable to get a large corporation to comply with pollution regulations. The company was pumping its waste liquids into a river as it had been doing for decades. At the same time it was taking clean water, essential for its functioning, from the stream upstream. According to the company, purifying the waste would be too expensive, resulting in a negative impact on their profitability.

The solution turned out to be simpler than anyone could have guessed. Government forced the company to take the water needed for the plant downstream from the point at which the waste liquids were being pumped into the river. Astonishingly, the company immediately found a way that was not impossibly expensive to purify the water. The company continued to flourish and there was little effect on profitability. •

## DESIGN BETTER BUSINESS CARDS

Business cards are the brand ambassadors of your business. They remind people about your company when you are not there to do it in person. This is why it is important to get these useful tools right. Here are five tips to help you make the most of your business cards:

### 1. SIZE MATTERS

Make your business cards a standard size. While this goes against some people’s belief it makes it easier to carry them and for clients to store them.

### 2. HIGHLIGHT IMPORTANT TEXT

Think about what you want people to do when they get your business card. You could want them to phone you, Google your company, send you an email or visit your website. This is your call to action, so make it clear what you want them to do by highlighting it on the card by making the text bigger, bolder or using a different colour.

### 3. KEEP THE BRAND IMAGE CONSISTENT

Use the same colours, fonts and images as you do with your other branding to keep the brand consistent in all your communication.

### 4. KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL

Make sure that your cards are professional looking. Do not use too many colours or fonts. An unprofessional card will leave people wondering if they should use your services or products when you cannot get something as simple as the business card right.

### 5. HAVE A TAGLINE

If your name is not self explanatory then add a tagline to explain what your business does. •

