

Master's Thesis

Turku University of Applied Sciences

Creative Design Management

2024

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Enabling creativity with the right leadership

A study on leading and developing creative design
in an advertising agency



Master's Thesis | Abstract

Turku University of Applied Sciences

Master of Culture and Arts, Creative Design Management

2024 | 63 Pages

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Enabling creativity with the right leadership

A study on leading and developing creative design in an advertising agency.

Creative leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering a creative culture and ensuring effective teamwork in advertising agencies. This thesis aimed to identify ideal leadership practices for developing creative design in a Finnish mid-size advertising agency. The theoretical background explored advertising agencies as creative, profit-driven organizations and the characteristics of creatives and creative leaders, including the different roles of creative leaders.

The research was based on a survey conducted with employees of the target organization. The survey results identified clear needs and opportunities for creative leadership and highlighted other development points that the organization can address collaboratively.

The study succeeded in finding best practices for leading and enabling creativity at the agency by addressing the specific needs of its creative designers and account directors. The insights gained will support the organization's management in taking the next steps toward developing creative design.

Keywords:

Creative leadership, Leadership, Creative organizations, Advertising agency, Creative development, Creatives

Opinnäytetyö (YAMK) | tiivistelmä

Turun ammattikorkeakoulu

Master of Culture and Arts, Creative Design Management

2024 | 63 sivua

Anna Valkonen

Luovuuden mahdollistaminen hyvän johtajuuden avulla

Tutkimus luovan työn johtamisesta ja kehittämisestä mainostoimistossa.

Luovalla johtajuudella on keskeinen rooli luovan kulttuurin edistämässä ja tehokkaan tiimityön varmistamisessa mainostoimistoissa. Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tunnistaa ihanteellisia johtamiskäytäntöjä luovan suunnittelun kehittämiseksi suomalaisessa keskisuudessa mainostoimistossa. Teoreettinen viitekehys tarkasteli mainostoimistoja luovina, voittoa tavoittelevina organisaatioina ja selvitti luovien suunnittelijoiden ja johtajien ominaisuuksia sekä luovien johtajien rooleja.

Tutkimus perustui kyselyyn, joka tehtiin kohdeorganisaation työntekijöille. Kyselystä ilmeni selkeitä tarpeita ja mahdollisuuksia luovalle johtajuudelle sekä muita konkreettisia kehityskohteita, joita organisaatio voi yhdessä käsitellä.

Opinnäytetyössä määriteltiin onnistuneesti parhaat käytännöt luovuuden johtamiseen ja mahdollistamiseen, huomioiden suunnittelijoiden ja asiakkuusjohtajien tarpeet. Kyselyn tulokset tarjoavat organisaation johdolle arvokasta tietoa seuraavien askelten ottamiseen luovan suunnittelun kehittämisessä.

Asiasanat:

Asiasanat, Luova johtaminen, Johtajuus, Luova organisaatio, Mainostoimisto, Luovuuden kehittäminen, Luova suunnittelija

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1 Introduction

In a meeting I had while in the first stages of writing the present study, a client stated that the main asset of an advertising agency – such as the one I work in – is creative ideas. El Murad & West (2004) echo this sentiment by defining that in its most simple form, “advertising creativity” means the process of producing and developing advertising ideas. The general consensus in academia is indeed that creativity is at the heart of an advertising agency (Poss 2014, 16; Lynch 2022, 24). Creativity does not happen in a vacuum, but needs to be constantly fed. Creative leadership in advertising prepares a fertile soil for innovations and ideas to grow from, provides meaningfulness via an inspiring vision, and offers everyday support and help to designers.

For many years, leading and developing creative design at the agency I work in, ILME, has not been clearly outlined or guided. I find it interesting whether creativity and creative work has developed in the organization without organization-wide leadership, and what the situation would be, if stronger creative leadership had been present. My personal experience suggests that development currently occurs independently in the creative teams where the designers and account directors are responsible for the quality of the design. Account directors, who manage the accounts, and also act as project managers, often take part in creative work while also having the responsibility of managing and resourcing projects, as well as budgeting and financial performance. As time and money is of the essence, account directors also make the decision on how much time can be dedicated to groundwork, ideation, and iterations. The designers are often consulted when making cost estimations, but ultimately need to adapt their time management according to the resources allocated to them. At times this may lead to hurried work and relying on tried-and-tested solutions instead of taking risks and testing innovative ideas.

The goal of this thesis is to understand whether my colleagues at ILME wish for stronger creative leadership in the form of a person or persons dedicated to

developing creativity and creative design. I aim to understand the hopes and expectations of my peers on developing creative design in the agency. The main research question is, **can a best practice of leading and enabling creativity and better creative work at ILME be established, which meets the needs of the designers and account directors of the agency.**

There are three major beneficiaries should the thesis, and the possible implementation of its outcome, be successful. These parties are ILME, its employees and its customers. The organization benefits from data-based insight on how employees perceive creative work and leading and developing it. Leading and developing creative work gives support to creative designers, perhaps leading to more happiness and meaningfulness at work, and boosting fruitful and innovative creative outcomes. Creative outcomes and innovative marketing ideas enable new opportunities for the customers. To go full circle, ideally this would mean happier clients and happier employees, leading to productivity and financial gains for the organization – and a happy owner.

As the present study is development-oriented, I aimed to find sources and discourse that directly address creative industries, especially advertising. The multidisciplinary selection of sources, including academic research, case studies, and professional insights, explores different aspects of creativity and creative leadership in the context of advertising. The theoretical framework combines perspectives from organizational behavior, leadership theories and paradigms, and creative industries research, employing both academic and professional discourses. I purposefully made the choice to exclude studies on the general theme of creativity and leadership, which could have made the thesis more well-rounded to larger audiences. However, a more straightforward approach helps connect the thesis to the research question and a more specific audience. Moreover, it helps in giving more practical and relevant development suggestions that directly address the needs of the target organization.

2 Advertising agencies as creative business organizations

The two words behind creative leadership – creativity and leadership – are both very broad themes that are difficult, even impossible to concisely define. Especially creativity and its intuitive qualities are domains of brain activity that are of great academic interest, but remain in the realm of mostly inexplicable, yet profoundly human, properties. For the purposes of the present study, I study these themes in the context of creative, profit-seeking organizations, and by understanding the characteristics of creatives, creative leaders and their roles and leadership styles.

In this chapter I will present some defining features of expert organizations where most of the work is creative design. As advertising agencies sell creativity for profit, and one of my hypotheses is that focusing on financial performance in a creative business can be problematic, I will also examine the intersection of creativity and finance in this chapter.

2.1 Characteristics of a creative organization

First, it is important to distinguish between creative organizations and organizational creativity. Generally said, creative organizations in creative industries, such as advertising, entertainment, and publishing, thrive on a culture that fosters innovation and supports both individual and collaborative creativity while aligning with organizational, strategic goals (Dennett, 2022). These organizations are often defined by their ability to embrace original thinking, and produce artistic or inventive work.

Organizational creativity is manifested in any organization, and in any industry, which demonstrates novelty in its operations (Nisula 2013, 26). As the target organization of the present study is an advertising agency, I will focus on creative organizations in creative industries, more specifically advertising and marketing communications.

Complementing Dennett's definition of a creative culture, Uusikylä (2012, 181–183) claims that the defining features of a creative organization are risk-taking, sense of freedom, suitably challenging tasks, constructive debates and trust. Trust and freedom are generally seen as the foundations of a psychologically secure workplace, where creativity and original ideas can flow freely (Mandelin 2021, 84). Moreover, trusting and believing in employees is often the spark that empowers people, makes them rise to the occasion and give more of themselves (Covey 2022, 126–150).

A creative workplace needs to be an environment where everyone can be themselves and where every opinion is heard (Varho 2023, 29–30). In the case of ILME, all employee experience studies done in the recent years have shown that ILME is a workplace where employees feel free to be themselves (Mainostoimisto Ilme 2024). This is the ideal basis to build creative culture on.

2.2 Commercializing creativity

Besides lack of leadership, several things can hinder creative work. Some of the most commonly recognized factors are micromanagement and lack of time and resources in conjunction with financial performance pressure (Uusikylä 2012, 191; Armstrong & Page 2015, 11; Martela & Jarenko 2017, 70).

To quote an anonymous senior account director, advertising is *“that lovely area where art and business rub up against each other”* (Hackley & Kover 2007). And rubbing can cause friction. As advertising is a business, many theories indeed see financial gain as the sole value of creative advertising work. According to Figurska & Sokol (2021), creativity is a key factor in innovation, competitiveness and better performance of an organization. However, even though advertising creativity can be described with the word artistry, and creatives as artists (Poss 2014, 20–25), according to Figurska & Sokol, the work has no value until it is commercialized and translated into a specific product, service or process offered to the client. Mandelin & Poutanen (2017,

134) agrees that in commercial businesses and organizations, the value of creative work is in its financial gain.

This reflects the sentiment that there “*seems to be a cultural divide between the suits and the creatives in the advertising world*” (Hackley & Kover 2007).

Creatives generally need autonomy in their work (Poss 2014, 19) and problems arise when too much control is exerted (Uusikylä 2012, 180–181, 191). Heikkilä (2022, 16) notes that in many organizations in the creative industry, the speed and cost-efficiency of work has become more important than supporting creativity. This means that resources allocated to creative work become more and more scarce. Armstrong & Page (2015, 4) note that leaders and managers of organizations can struggle with the balance of fostering creativity and innovation while simultaneously stressing financial and commercial success.

By putting financial performance front and center in a creative organization, efficiency and cutting down on resources is favored and time allocated to creative work is minimized. This in turn leads to a decrease in creative output, and especially innovativity and the creation of completely new ideas and methods (Mandelin & Poutanen 2017, 135; Mandelin 2021, 36). In this situation, creative designers have less time for free thinking, and are more likely to rely on tried-and-tested practices and solutions (Csikszentmihalyi 2007, 93).

However, this does not mean that creatives want limitless resources. Deadlines and boundaries are often seen as motivators. Poss (2014, 71) has found that even though creatives often wish for more time for creative work and professional development, they still find deadlines both mandatory but also motivational. As one creative says,

There's always a struggle between the time that you have and getting through the process. It's also the thing where if you didn't have any deadline, then you could keep going almost into...how long can you spend coming up with an idea?” (Poss 2014, 71).

Even though the creative process remains largely the same, different creatives have different ways and timelines of working. One issue is the fact that creativity

is usually impossible to confine to time or place (Hackley & Kover 2007; Poss 2014, 21, 72; Heikkilä 2022, 18). This makes the factual time spent on work difficult to track.

Improving efficiency can also be found in other practices such as better scheduling and minimizing interruptions. Working at an advertising agency is often hectic and constantly interrupted by meetings, messages, multitasking and administrative work (Glaveski 2018, Heikkilä 2022, 21), which also affects focus and time spent on different tasks.

2.3 Can we meet halfway?

Csikszentmihalyi (2007, 172) quotes Norman Augustine from Lockheed Martin. Upon asking Augustine what is the most important thing they want to achieve in their work, they answered,

“The “legal” answer would probably be that I wanted to increase the value of the stocks of the company. In reality, I was trying to build the best business in the aviation industry. I thought, if we achieve this, then the value of the stocks might increase as well. I think a person must have higher ambitions than mere money-earning”.

It would be important to see creativity and commercialization as things that support, and not fight against, each other. Often times better financial performance can mean more resources for creative work, and improved creative work as an enabler for more business and opportunities for meaningful and challenging work. The balance can be found with leadership and an inspiring vision.

According to Martela & Jarenko (2017, 37–52) internal drive and motivation form the basis for the better performance of an organization. Drive and enthusiasm make people put more effort into work, boost strength and perseverance, creativity and capability for innovation, and the ability to encounter clients in a positive manner. This radiates into the whole organization

as more efficient work, better customer relations and better employee retention as employees are more committed to the workplace.

Some ways to build a better business via employee motivation can be found from principals of creative leadership, which I consider in the next chapter of the study. Furthermore, the results of the study can offer insight into leadership paradigms and practices that can both directly and indirectly give positive influence on creative work that drives a successful business.

3 Creativity and Leadership

In this chapter I will explore the meaning and possibilities of creative leadership and leading creatives. Literature suggests that one working model for leadership in creative organizations is to have a separate creative leader and commercial director (Huuhka 2010, 45; Armstrong & Page 2015, 7). In this paragraph, and in this study, I will focus on the characteristics of creatives, creative leaders, their role, and different leadership paradigms.

3.1 Three P's – the foundations to support

In creative leadership, the three P's model is widely used in describing the creative design process in an organizational context. Three P's has been developed by Sasser & Koslow (2008). According to Sasser & Koslow, the three P's stand for person, process and place. Person refers to the creativity and characteristics of an individual. Process refers to the generation and the process of coming up with a creative idea, including the abilities and strategic capabilities for it. Generally, and as a narrow description, the creative process includes problem identification, information gathering and idea generation. It can be contested, that the process is not the same for all designers. Place refers to the environment where the process takes place. It is deemed important, that the environment for creative work supports psychological safety, freedom to express oneself and getting support from leaders (Covey 2022, 126–150; Mandelin 2021, 84; Varho 2023, 29–30). The leaders of a creative organization must make sure that the three P's are recognized, supported and helped to be the best they can be – the individual, the work, and the surroundings.

3.2 The creative personality

Are there common denominators for people perceived as “creatives” that could help understand them better in order to lead them better? In literature, an

abundance of definitions is found. Creatives are often described with following qualities and more: artistic, quirky, brash, brilliant, strong-minded, dignified, proud, passionate, curious, risk-taking, emotional to the point of being volatile, and being approval-seeking thinkers who fluidly switch between divergent and convergent thinking (Selby et al. 2005; Hackley & Kover 2007; Huuhka 2010, 78; 5–6, Poss 2014, 19–20; Lynch 2022, 30). Moreover, Armstrong & Page (2015, 14) claim that managing or leading creatives can be challenging as creatives “don’t really like rules and structures”. Poss’s study (2014, 53) contests this and states that creatives need both freedom and structure – boundaries help because being limitless means that there are too many possibilities.

Koski et al. (2007, 68) claim that creative people constantly move between good and bad self-esteem; strength and weakness; hope and desperation. Moreover, Hackley & Kover (2007) suggest that trying to characterize the creative identity is futile and should remain an enigma. So why the need to define, and to characterize? Because we want clarity, and to understand ourselves and others, and the relationships in between, better.

3.3 Features of creative leaders

When describing a creative leader, literature at large paints a picture of a resourceful, visionary person with well developed emotional intelligence and an ability to listen keenly. Poss (2014, 58) says that when a creative leader is a creative themselves, it is appreciated by other creatives, because they “speak the same language”.

Huuhka (2010, 59) makes the claim that being a visionary is what sets leaders apart from managers. With being a visionary comes the task of setting a vision. Huuhka continues that setting an inspiring vision of what an organization could be, or grow into, stimulates the motivation and creativity of the employees and mobilizes the organization to reach the goals set for them. Moreover, setting an

inspiring vision gives purpose beyond paychecks and promotions (Csikszentmihalyi 2007, 179–180).

But what drives these visionaries? According to Csikszentmihalyi (2003, 223–226) there are three different characteristics that stand out. The first is doing one's best. To put it simply, when one strives to be and do their best, it leads to creativity and exceeding former boundaries, and catches on to the rest of the organization. The second is helping people. A servant leader is not focused on offering a service or a product, but to altruistically help other people live better lives. The third is a will to build a better world – to have a conscience that covers the organization but also reaches beyond it to the community at large, and a will to insert sustainable values into the strategy of their organization.

Kiuru (34, 2019) shares the idea that the most important quality of a leader is to be a dreamer and a visionary. He continues that the most important skill of a leader is to recognize hidden talent. He claims that a true leader tirelessly searches for rising talents and gives credit to those who have earned their stripes. Kiuru adds to the discussion that the heaviest responsibility of a leader is to remove vagueness and uncertainty. A leader creates clarity, and works tirelessly to protect their team so that the team has the best chance to work on any problem to be solved.

Varho, who studied work meaningfulness in a Finnish advertising agency found that, for example, unclear briefings from customers, customers themselves not knowing what they need, and then hurriedly doing “something”, causes great decrease in meaningfulness and happiness in a creative's work (2023, 52). Here a creative leader can make a big difference by communicating well, understanding the customer and the creative team, and by asking the right questions. As some projects just are difficult and unclear, with constant changes, the leader must remain strong and guide the team through storms.

3.4 The leadership role

According to Csikszentmihalyi (2003, 104–106), when speaking about the fundamentals of leadership, an entrepreneur must first know, why people want to work for them in the first place. Then, according to that information, they must provide the employees surroundings and growth opportunities that satisfy their motivations, and which take into account the Three P's. Csikszentmihalyi (2003) continues that this is especially the case with knowledge workers that want to develop their expertise.

In the previous part, I listed the three things that motivate creative leaders according to Csikszentmihalyi (2003). Next, there are three functions they have to fulfill. First is providing the best possible circumstances for work. Second is to make work as meaningful and valuable as possible. The third is to recognize and reward the right people. This is the way to build and sustain a culture that is motivational and retains acquired talent. Talent retention also requires that leaders are trusted, work is meaningful, space and chances for developing are provided, and employees are supported and rightfully acclaimed (Varho 2023, 20).

Supporting the idea of the Three P's, Heikkilä (122,20) and Armstrong & Page (2015, 14) both explain that in order to foster a creative workplace, employees need to have psychological safety and freedom. This means removing any obstacles for creative people that prevent them from being their authentic selves and enabling and encouraging the free flow of their thoughts and ideas. Subsequently, creative leaders must be supportive and enable the creative process, and make creatives feel valued and appreciated (Poss 2014, 5, 73). This is especially important in creative teams, which are smaller groups inside the organization that do creative work for different clients (Poss 2014, 51). In creative teams, communication, atmosphere and the characteristics of the group members as individuals and as a team matter. Leaders must support healthy team spirit that allows its members to feel involved, express opinions,

try new things and take risks (Malmelin 2017, 78). These are vital in the quest for innovative creative outcomes.

Poss (2014, 55) has studied that creative leaders can positively influence designers by coaching others, to help generate ideas, to ask questions, and to speak as a fellow creative rather than a superior or a boss. Especially coaching and helping bring creativity out of others is appreciated in Poss's study, as is asking the right, open-ended questions that challenge the creatives to explain their creative process, the source of the creative idea, and whether it will fit the brief. In the same vein, by understanding the clients' brands and businesses, creative leaders can help the team navigate working in a more efficient and consistent manner while preserving creativity and innovation. Geoffee and Jones (2007) continue that leaders need to reduce distractions especially concerning administrative tasks, encourage a culture where failures are accepted, even celebrated, and embrace independent creative efforts.

Poss (2014, 6; 27) writes that being a creative leader can be difficult because the role requires risk-taking and trying to do things differently. In contrast, Sternburg et al. (2004) claim that a creative leader can also accept the current state of things without pushing change. They claim that there are three types of creative leaders; those who accept the existing way of doing things, those who challenge the way of doing things, and those who synthesize the two. As previously discussed, creative leaders are often expected to be visionaries. Therefore it seems surprising that a creative leader would not seek some sort of change. In the same vein, according to Poss (2014, 65), creatives do not appreciate a creative leader that plays it too safe. When teams always go with a sure, tried-and-true solution – which is likely to happen when working under strict time limit or financial pressure – growth and innovation become scarce. If a creative leader also yields to pressure and favors conservative or “sure” solutions, are they really creative leaders?

Poss's study (2014, 60) also mentions that creative leaders need to recognize that creative work is emotional, and creatives constantly work and draw inspiration from their personal experiences. Here two parallels can be identified

– one is that emotional intelligence is the most needed quality from a creative leader besides offering an inspiring vision. The second is the simple truth that advertising is about impacting peoples' emotions, and it can be difficult to turn emotions into business. Creative leaders have a delicate line to tread when emotionally supporting, coaching and giving constructive feedback to creatives while also taking into account financial performance.

3.5 Leadership models and paradigms

In the previous paragraphs I briefly considered the role and characteristics of creatives and creative leaders. But what is the difference between having innate qualities that make you a great leader, and can leadership – for example creative leadership – be taught or learned? Paradigms and theories through different times have had differing views on the matter, and it is hard to see that a modern leader would clearly represent one paradigm. As people are complex creatures, a seasoned leader is able to derive the best qualities from different theories. Next I give a quick run-through of different paradigms of the past, present and future.

3.5.1 Historical paradigms and theories

Concerning leadership as something a person is born to do, great man theory and trait theory suggested that leaders are indeed born with innate qualities such as intelligence and charisma (Gorkes 2021; Alvarez 2023). Behavioral theories and contingency theories shifted the focus from personal, charismatic traits to the behavior of leaders – making the claim that leadership can be learned and developed, and that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership (Poss 2014, 6; Alvarez 2023). Transactional leadership emphasizes rewarding good performance and punishing failure (Aarons 2006). Situational leadership stresses that the leader must adapt their style of leading to the competence, readiness and commitment of their employees (McHugh 2024).

3.5.2 Modern paradigms and theories

Transformational and adhocratic leadership aims to inspire and motivate employees to achieve their full potential, often via charismatic and visionary leadership (Aarons 2007; Huuhka 2010, 21–23). Servant leadership and quantum leadership prioritizes addressing the needs and well-being of the community, encouraging collaboration and empathy (Huuhka 2010, 24–36; Mandelin 2021, 79–83). Authentic leadership emphasizes transparency, integrity and ethical decision-making with the leaders being their true selves (Gavin 2019). Laissez-faire leadership means trusting the employees and giving them maximal freedom and autonomy without micromanaging or other unnecessary interference (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 67; Mandelin 2021, 73–78,). Collaborative leadership focuses on teamwork, cooperation and shared decision-making with open communication and collaboration at the heart of the culture (Mandelin 2021, 83–85).

3.5.3 Rising paradigms and theories in the creative industry

Adaptive leadership, by its name, focuses on navigating changing situations, encourages creative problem-solving and innovation, and supports and mobilizes employees to participate in active ideation (Ramalingam et al. 2020). Distributed or shared leadership emphasizes collaboration and distributes accountability and decision-making across the organization (Somers 2022). Ambidextrous leadership addresses the challenge of balancing between innovation and creativity while maintaining structure and efficiency (Mandelin 2021, 87–110). Neuroleadership explores brain science, for example by reducing stress and promoting cognitive flexibility to boost creativity and innovation (Ruiz-Rodriguez et al. 2023). Sustainability-oriented leadership balances creativity with responsibility, focusing on purpose, innovation and accountability for global sustainability issues (Bärlund & Perko 2013). Inclusive leadership emphasizes diverse teams where every voice is heard, leading to more chances for innovation (Mandelin 2021, 69–70). Lean and agile leadership

embraces flexible and iterative problem-solving and constant improvement in fast-paced environments (Torkkola 2015).

3.6 Reflection on literature review and leadership paradigms and theories

The model for good creative leadership seems simple. A leader must possess a vision that they are able to inspirationally communicate to employees.

Moreover, a leader is also responsible for implementing the vision into daily work, and subsequently communicated also outside the organization.

A modern leader does not have to be a charismatic performer, but instead they need to be a keen listener, emotionally intelligent, and passionate about enabling the best possible circumstances for employees to do their work. As creative leaders are creative themselves, in a somewhat contradictory manner “creatives” are generally described as brilliant-but-childish artists that are unable to control their emotions, whereas “creative leaders” are emotionally intelligent, servant listeners who are good at communicating, and able to give clarity to employees.

Micromanagement and top-down orders are to be avoided at all costs. These rarely work in any workplaces, and especially in creative workplaces.

Employees must be trusted, listened to, and given both freedom and boundaries that help them do their work in order to gain innovative approaches and ideas.

For a leader who wants to develop, learning about different leadership paradigms could offer an interesting possibility into reflecting their style and ideas about leadership, and to pick the ideas that are most suitable to their workplace and the needs of the employees. It seems unlikely that any leader would completely belong under a certain paradigm or theory, but able to fluidly move between them, with interest in learning more. In the previous paragraphs I presented Csikszentmihalyi's idea that there are three main characteristics that stand out when describing creative leaders (2003, 223–226). Going back to these characteristics; doing one's best, helping others and wanting to build a

better world, it can be claimed that ideas of servant leadership and sustainability-oriented leadership are already built into these people.

Csikszentmihalyi (2007, 29) writes that in order to live a happy life, one must first know themselves. When one knows their own strengths and weaknesses, and is passionate about learning and change, they have the best chances to grow as a leader. Csikszentmihalyi's idea offers encouragement for those, who have the budding passion for creative leadership but feel insecure or incomplete for one reason or another. Those who aspire to be creative leaders should have mercy towards themselves. As Poss (2014) writes, many creative leaders don't necessarily actually consider themselves innately and profoundly innovative or creative, but say that these skills can be acquired via education and experience.

4 Research Design

In this chapter I present the target organization of this research and development oriented thesis, which is a case study of one organization. I proceed to explaining the data for this research and the research question I aim to answer.

4.1 Defining features of the target organization

The target organization is Mainostoimisto Ilme, referred in this study as ILME, a midsize advertising agency based in Finland. The agency was founded in 1996. ILME presently has a wide domestic and international customer portfolio ranging from heavy industrial B2B clients to commercial B2C customers. ILME has one founder and owner, who also currently works as the CEO, managing the organization and its employees. The agency also has a CMO who is responsible for the sales and marketing of the agency. ILME does not currently have a board or a management team.

Each customer of ILME has their own creative team that often consist of a person responsible for the account (various different titles) and creative designers (various different titles, such as art directors, copywriters, social media specialists and strategists). The agency does not have a dedicated person or people responsible for leading and developing creative design.

4.2 Research questions

The main research question is to find out whether there is a **best practice of leading and enabling creativity and better creative work at ILME be established, which meets the needs of the designers and account directors of the agency.**

4.3 Data and methods

For the purposes of the present study, I wanted to know what the employees of ILME think about creative work and creative leadership. As the target organization is a midsize company, I was able to invite all employees to take part in a survey that could potentially give insight on the thoughts of the whole organization.

The survey (see appendix 1) was executed through SurveyPal for the employees of ILME. The link to the survey was sent on ILME's general Slack channel with an open invitation to partake. At the time of the survey there were 32 persons on the channel, out of which the following can be counted off: an invalid double account, a retired person's account, the account of a person not working at the time of the survey, and my own account. One was an intern's account, with whom we agreed that they would not participate. Two accounts were of people on a freelance contract (but not strictly prohibited from answering). One is the owner/CEO's account, and they were not prohibited from answering either. Some people on the channel are not directly creatives or account directors, to whom the survey was primarily targeted. Taking these into consideration, my estimation is that there were approximately 23 people eligible for taking the survey, of which 20 took part. I was satisfied with the participation rate.

The survey was anonymous and no personal data was gathered. The participants were given the opportunity to name customers to get development ideas for the team. All answers were read and analyzed question by question, not as independent answers of each participant. This made both analyzing the data easier, and protected anonymity, because it would have been more difficult to recognize the person behind the answer, had I tried to do that. In a small number of cases, however, I could guess the person because we had previously discussed the themes they mentioned in their answers. These cases aside, anonymity was kept.

The aim of the survey was to gain understanding on how the creatives and account directors of the organization see and experience creative work, what are their needs for creative leadership in the agency, and what are their top priorities for improving creative design at the workplace. The survey has multi-selection questions where I seek quantitative data, but most of the questions are open answers, which I will analyze qualitatively. The survey was divided into different parts: 1. background information and previous experiences with creative leadership in other organizations; 2. the person as a creative; 3. creative teams at ILME; 4. ILME as a creative workplace; 5. most important development points and biggest challenges for creative work at ILME and 6. thoughts, expectations and hesitations on creative leadership at ILME.

4.4 Research gaps

There are a number of things that would have made the study more well-rounded. Theoretical background on organizational change would have complemented the study and given insight on how to navigate the upcoming change into appointing a person or persons to develop creative design at ILME.

On the research data, throughout the project many people recommended interviewing creative leaders and directors from other agencies to get their perspective. However, for me it was most important to hear my colleagues' thoughts. Ultimately, I was content with the survey data and did not see additional interviews necessary for the success of the study. Concerning the data I had, it would have been interesting to see how and whether the answers of account directors and creatives differ from each other. However, the focus of the study is not to seek out different perspectives of different people, but instead what the overall data reflects.

A further study could be conducted on implementing the development ideas of the thesis and measuring their success as a follow-up case study. Moreover, a comparative study on another organization or organizations could give

interesting insight on whether the findings of the present study indicate similarities in Finnish advertising agencies or even internationally.

5 Report of survey results

In this chapter I will present the survey results. In the survey, I sought insight on different things that might affect developing and leading creative work at ILME. Participants were asked about their previous experiences on creative leadership in other workplaces, about themselves as creatives, about their creative teams at ILME, about ILME as a creative workplace with financial interest, and about thoughts, expectations and hesitations about creative leadership at ILME.

5.1 Previous experiences in creative organizations

As ILME employees have very different backgrounds from different companies and different times at ILME, and thus also different experiences of creative leadership, I wanted to learn about these experiences. There was a lot of variation. The majority stated that they had not worked with a creative director or a person holding a similar title. Developing creativity has been the responsibility of creatives themselves.

Those who had worked with a creative leader, or had themselves been in that position, also had different experiences in models or responsibilities of creative leaders. The common idea was that creative leadership brought clarity to work. Creative leaders had acted as sparring partners, overseeing creative work especially in new business opportunities, promoting creativity in different ways such as speaking and sharing interesting materials, and enabling better creative work via servant leadership. This reflects the theoretical background of the study quite well, even though the answers are more focused on tasks than qualities or characteristics.

5.2 You as a creative designer

I asked about the participants' thoughts on working as a creative at ILME, what sparks or hinders their creativity, and whether work is meaningful for them. With

this, I offered the participants a chance to reflect on themselves as well as the workplace and its future. This information is valuable regarding creative leadership as it gives insight on the creatives at ILME and how they personally experience their creative work, which helps to help them.

Most survey participants shared the idea that creativity is at the core of everything they do at work, and that creativity is visible in everything that is designed at ILME. Some also mentioned that their work includes basic routine jobs, in which creativity might be sparse, but the work is nevertheless appreciated.

Many shared that the work of creatives is mostly about problem-solving and coming up with novel ideas and insights for different client purposes, but with very limited resources and as little money spent as possible. Participants continued that the use of creativity is often curbed by time pressures and limited budgets, as well as the courage of clients. This is in accordance with chapter two of the present study, where I discussed literature on advertising agencies as businesses where creativity is sold for profit, and which can cause conflict. With this in mind, capable creative leadership can help with more efficient work timelines and problemsolving and by encouraging creative solutions.

Almost all participants wish for more time and space for creative work. This sentiment carries throughout the survey. Time is also hoped for learning and developing, as professional development is deemed important. One concrete example for training is how to better sell ideas to clients. Some participants mentioned this as a chance to increase the success rate and efficiency of projects. This would also help encourage clients to use more bold ideas.

Increasing teamwork, ambition and psychological safety were seen as foundations for better creativity, and for developing the culture at ILME to encourage trying new things and to think outside the box without fear of failure.

Participants are active in drawing inspiration from everything that surrounds them. The amount of sources mentioned of inspiration is vast and inspirational in itself. Some of the most popular mentions were teamwork, learning from

discussions with colleagues, and learning from new and challenging projects. Following the advertising industry both domestically and abroad was also mentioned often. Some of the other apparent things were enjoying culture, art, TV series, music, people, science, sports, nature, literature, travelling, news – anything and everything. Interestingly, some participants also mentioned hard work, structure and boundaries as a sort-of inspiration. Sometimes there is no chance for “*waiting for inspiration to fall from the sky*”, but one must do the groundwork and actively work on ideas.

There was some divide on whether participants their work is overall meaningful. It was notable, that many participants stated their work is not meaningful for them, but that they still love the work and are happy that they are paid for it. This divide in answers might indicate that the concept of meaningfulness means different things to different people. “Meaning” and “meaningfulness” mean two different things and can easily be mixed (Varho 2023, 13). For many, meaningfulness correlates with the impact their work has on the world. For example, working with non-profit organizations would be one way to add meaningfulness.

5.3 Creative teams at ILME

In the introduction of the present study I wrote that currently creative work is developed and led within the existing creative teams built around each client. Therefore I wanted to ask participants about how they view teamwork at ILME, and whether they recognize a creative process in the teams. For a creative leader this is important to understand as they need to offer processes while also understanding the inner mechanics of different creative teams.

Amongst the survey participants, there were many different experiences. Many were aware of differences inside the organization, showing that there is some visibility or shared information between different client teams. Some saw that designers are separated in silos within the teams depending on their job title - art directors working only on visuals, copywriters on text, and so forth.

Some teams had clear processes. Again, time and financial performance and the pressure of an increasing hourly rate were mentioned as the key driver for creative work in the spirit of getting “something or anything” done, and the reason for leaning towards tried-and-true solutions instead of entertaining novel ideas.

The following is a most-likely process in a project, according to the survey.

1. Briefing from client
2. Team meeting to discuss the brief with the team and sharing responsibility. Ideation might start at this point.
3. Solo ideation. Here, depending on the roles within the team, different people may concentrate on different things.
4. Team meeting to share ideas and develop them.
5. Developing ideas into a presentation and having final check with the team.
6. Getting feedback from client and reiterating until finished.

There are many deviations of this formula, depending, for example, on whether the client is a bigger or a smaller one with different budgets. In some teams it is mentioned, that after client briefing designers begin solo ideation immediately without a team meeting in between.

As mentioned previously, team roles matter. Some respondents remark that the role of insight and creative briefing is lost. They feel that creative ideas should always be based on an insight. This confusion may partly be due to the lack of creative direction or leadership.

The majority of the participants think that in teams, account directors facilitate the circumstances for creative designing, while designers need to have self-leadership skills. There is no clear indication on how decision-making is distributed in teams.

Almost without exception, survey participants feel safe in ideating and suggesting different ideas in their client teams. Sometimes the time pressure

affects the process so that teams have to “run” with the first possible idea, and other paths are not considered. Some mention tensions in teams that prevent voicing all ideas out loud. These tensions include conflicts between team members, anxiety in teams and fearing judgement or being laughed at. Some feel that there are team members who might dismiss or overpower others’ ideas. One participant also mentions that they themselves fear that they overpower others, and strives to give others space.

In general, survey participants are happy with their teams and very appreciative of the talent and knowhow of their team members. Other insight is still appreciated as it opens new possibilities. Help is especially hoped for when same teams have been working with the same client for years, and feel stuck or in risk of starting to repeat themselves. Here, again, financial performance sets the rules. As one participant notes on expanding teams,

“If something is sold for 10 hours, you can’t use 50 hours on it, because the project will not be profitable. This is not good business. Good business enables better circumstances for us all to work and be creative”.

Another view is,

“We definitely need guests into teams to enable more ideas and to refine those ideas, but as teams get bigger, account directors notice that the hourly rate is going down, and then we’re in trouble as we’re expected to make hard profit – it’s money vs creativity.”.

One person notes that due to this financial pressure, they have a few trusted persons they ask help from, as even a few minutes of exchanging ideas may help surpass a problem.

5.4 The vision and direction of ILME

It was important to understand the survey participants’ view on ILME as a creative organization, and if boosting creativity and creative direction would lead to financial gains. Moreover, as the role of vision was very prominent in the

theoretical background of the present study, especially regarding the qualities of a creative leader, I wanted to ask what the participants think about ILME's vision and its importance to them.

Asking whether ILME has a clear vision, participants' opinion was divided. Those who worded the vision mentioned "strategic partnership" and "making a profit". It was also felt that the vision was individual and not collective. Some participants said that there was a vision, but it could be clearer. Participants are also 50/50 divided on whether a clear vision would affect their work.

Participants think ILME's slogan "*Rohkeus kasvaa*" (engl. *Courage to grow*) is partly manifested in daily work. The common sentiment on what courage means is that teams should challenge themselves more and aim for out-of-the-box ideas. However, limited resources are mentioned as a hindrance, as is clients' courage to challenge themselves.

The survey participants were asked whether better creative leadership and creative work would support ILME as a profit-seeking business. The participants widely saw that by 1. giving more time and space for creativity, 2. by listening to, encouraging and thanking colleagues, and 3. with good leadership, better creative work would lead to better financial performance and better references. This could translate into acquiring new clients open to bold creative ideas. Higher ambition and more lucrative outcomes would increase positive talk about ILME, build the ILME brand and help ILME reach a better market position on par with bigger agencies in Finland. One participant noted that ILME should have the ambition to look beyond marketing creativity and aim for business creativity that would lead to genuine strategic partnership.

5.5 Most important development points and biggest challenges for creative work at ILME

In a multi-selection choice for the most important things to develop at ILME, participants voted 1. more teamwork in creative planning; 2. training opportunities based on personal development interests"; 3. designated creative leaders to

develop creative work at ILME and 4. coaching from ILME colleagues as the most important things to develop



Figure 1. What aspects would you like to see more to support creative work at ILME? Consider this from you personal experience, your work, and you client teams' perspectives. Select four most important.

In a multi-selection choice on what hindrances or challenges the participants see for creative work at the moment, the top four answers were 1. insufficient time resources, 2. financial pressures and focus on numbers, 3. lack of processes, and tied at 4. unclear vision and mission and difficulty to propose bold creative solutions. Many reasonings were about resourcing pressures. Participants see time and money as the most important driver for the creative process instead of being innovative, and a steady moneyflow being more important than risk-taking.

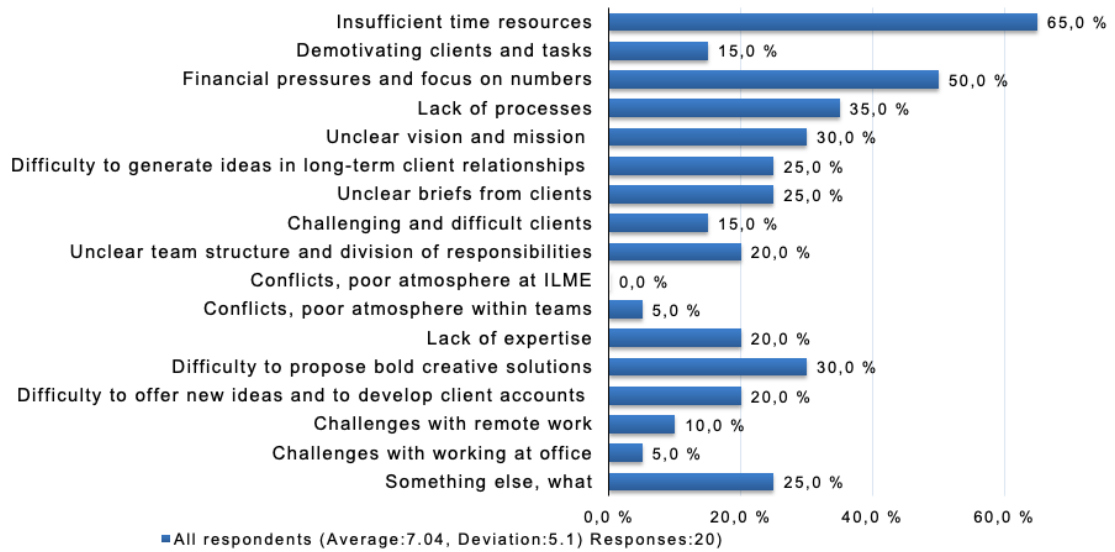


Figure 2. What challenges do you currently recognize in creative work at ILME? Think about this from your personal experience, your work, and your client teams' perspectives. Select the four most important.

Education and trainings are seen as a source of motivation and personal development, but also important for the competitive edge of ILME. Trainings are also mentioned as a possibility to network. Aspects of learning and development are present in everyday work at ILME, but a time budget that previously existed for trainings and education has been either removed or minimized lately. This contradicts with ILME's philosophy as a workplace where the development of the employees' professional growth and know-how is a central part of the organization's capability (Mainostoimisto Ilme 2024).

Clear systematic approaches and processes were seen as the key element sought from creative leadership. One participant also looked beyond teams and stressed that creative culture at ILME should be developed in the whole organization.

Very interestingly and in direct contrast to the rest of the survey, "more time resources" did not belong to the top four things to develop at ILME. A participant even presented an opposing idea to having more time resources (as it was one answer in the multi-choice), saying,

“That we should have more time resources is a weird idea. --- it does not matter to the client whether we have spent 10 minutes or 10 hours on something. It only matters how well the idea supports the client’s business --- The courage from the client to accept creative ideas is not down to the client, but on how good our idea is, and how well we can sell it”.

One view on behalf of time and space states,

“More time for designing and courage for ideating nearly go hand in hand. If we reach for the skies, it doesn’t happen by tightening the belt and doing less in even shorter time.”

Another remarks,

“All creatives would be in heaven if we got more time. Sometimes it would be good just to look out of the window and empty the brain in order to reach a good outcome, and not squeeze out a concept in one day alone”.

5.6 Thoughts on creative leadership

In the last part of the survey I aimed to find out what the participants wish from a future creative leader or leaders, and if they had any hesitations on the matter.



Figure 3. Listed characteristics are related to leadership and management styles. Which five qualities do you consider most important for a creative leader?

In a multi-selection choice on what kind of qualities and characteristics the respondents wish for from a person or persons responsible for developing creative work, the top five answers were 1. inspirational and motivational; 2. emotionally intelligent with good interpersonal skills; 3. exceptionally creative and inventive; 4. skilled problem-solver and 5. diverse experience in the creative field.

The survey participants have different needs and requirements for creative leadership. Some mention that in order to have the trust of their peers, the person or persons must be well-integrated into the culture of ILME, share the same values, know their colleagues and be genuinely interested in them and developing their skills. The person or persons need to have high emotional intelligence. They need to understand how to communicate with different people in different situations.

Concerning work the person or persons need to have availability and time allocated for the task. Many survey participants see value in employing a few

different people with different core expertise. Having more than one person would also mean that there is more availability. Time is essential as the person or persons need to be able to focus in order to give each team and task the attention it needs, and there might be more than one task going on at once. Especially if the person or persons are also fixed members of a creative team at ILME, time allocation is important.

The person or persons must be quick to understand what is essential, and what is the core of each task or challenge in order to guide the team. Teams benefit from problem-solving becoming more agile. The person or persons must be available to all teams, and be able to both give quick advice and/or participate in team work more profoundly.

The person should have well-rounded experience and knowledge of different types of clients, industries, and aspects of creative work, but are not expected to be “the expert of everything”. The most important thing is to have the right attitude and a mentality of finding out what they do not necessarily know. The person must not push their own ideas to the team, but rather feed the teams’ creativity, help them in finding the right solutions, recognize and develop good ideas, and enable the best circumstances for the teams to succeed. Moreover, the person or persons should develop creative culture in ILME at organization level and consistently inspire their colleagues to exceed themselves. Capability in developing processes and giving structure is seen as a big benefit, as is helping the teams to sell their ideas to clients.

The low hierarchy of ILME is appreciated by the survey participants and it is seen highly important to keep. If the person or persons responsible for developing creative work at ILME become an additional level of hierarchy, it will make things more difficult and poses a threat to the autonomy of the teams. A creative leader should not act as a “stamp of approval” giver, unless the team wants it.

The person or persons should always have a purpose when helping the teams – micromanagement, “hanging around” and “saying a lot without saying

anything” are simply not wanted. In the worst case, the person or persons might make work more difficult instead of helping. Moreover, the assistance to teams should always be relevant and concrete regarding the client and the brief, and be mindful of time and budget without pressuring the team about it.

6 Development ideas

The research clearly shows that the creative leadership at ILME is wanted, and there are many hopes and expectations. Based on the literature review and the survey results, I present ideas for development.

6.1 Discussion points

In addition to answering the research question, an additional development suggestion emerged, which I will present first. Certain topics were repeatedly mentioned in the answers, by a significant number of people, and a discussion on these themes would be beneficial to promote employee satisfaction at ILME.

I encourage discussing the issues most often mentioned by survey participants. These are 1. How financial performance and pressure affect ILME employees, both creative work and project management, and how common ground could be found between the two and not see them as opposing factors. 2. Regarding financial pressure, is there any way to make more time and space for creativity without sacrificing financial profitability, and to realistically assess how the time and space could translate into better business. 3. Resources and chances for development, education and trainings. Survey participants were clear about wanting and needing this possibility, so the status must be discussed, and how the management sees the matter. As mentioned before, constant development of the employees' professional capabilities is a part of the company's people-centric ideology, and the current situation does not reflect this in the best way. 4. The vision and mission of ILME – what are they, and how to make them clear and inspiring for the whole organization. 5. Need for processes and structures – more exact information on what the needed processes are would be beneficial, and whether some processes are already existing in some teams that could be implemented in others. In the answers I found that, for example, some teams clearly have a creative design process, while others do not, or the process is felt

somehow incomplete. Sharing best practices between teams would be beneficial.

On how to facilitate the discussion, I must note that discussions in smaller groups usually seem to work better at ILME in my experience. Smaller group discussions ensure all voices – concerns, opinions and development ideas – are heard. The discussion can be seen as a chance for organizational growth. Martela & Jarenko (2017, 185–195) give different examples of organizational change where employees are encouraged and empowered to think of solutions to different organizational problems, with the leader being the enabler and servant. This does not mean outsourcing problem-solving to employees, but rather let people know that everyone and anyone can take responsibility and make an impact in the organization.

Building a culture where employees are encouraged to bring up issues and collaboratively work on solutions would support the low hierarchy of ILME. This takes time, repetition, consistency and constant communication, but is very worthwhile. Adaptive, servant and collaborative styles of leadership work well in building a culture that is flexible and empowers employees to drive change. Even though the present study focuses on creative leadership, organizational changes that aim for a cultural switch must be led from the top-level management of the organization, otherwise roles can be muddled (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 194). The same goes for setting a vision – organization level must come first before setting a possible separate vision for creative work, as a creative vision needs to support the top level vision.

6.2 Best practices for creative leadership

The survey results clearly show that the need for creative leadership exists and the survey participants have distinct hopes for such leadership as well as hesitations. The participants wish for leadership to provide structure and processes, vision and motivation, but not to overstep into micromanagement or giving “a stamp of approval” on work. Moreover, the teams currently have full

autonomy of their work, and leadership should not jeopardize it. An authentic leadership style is favoured, because it is important that everyone is free to be their authentic selves at the workplace. The same authenticity and honesty from leaders helps build trust, credibility, and transparency, especially in the case that team members have any hesitations.

Time and space for creativity was a substantial theme that arose from the survey. Ambidextrous and adaptive leadership styles could help bridge the gap between giving space for innovative creation while also keeping in mind financial performance. Creative leaders could help the management and account directors with solving the issue. They could help evaluate in which cases it is better to stay on budget while still preserving the quality and creativity expected from ILME. On the other hand, they might spot good opportunities to take time and go an extra mile, whether it is a new business opportunity or growing an existing account.

It is clear that teamwork is important and valuable to the survey participants. Teamwork brings joy, a sense of belonging to a group and a chance for continuous development. Collaborative leadership fits well with the need to boost better and more creative work. A collaborative leader can help with troubleshooting and suggest new creative angles by working together with the team. Ideally, the leader helps and encourages the team to come up with solutions without doing the team's work for them. Furthermore, a leader can help the team members forget their usual roles, and encourage team participation from the very beginning, helping break down silos and give structure to ideating and creating.

A creative leader is expected to provide structures and processes for teams, and understand different roles within teams. A potential best practice could be creating standard operating procedures for projects, which allow flexibility while ensuring consistency and quality. This aligns with lean and agile leadership approaches, which emphasize efficiency via iterative feedback and adaptive processes.

According to the theoretical background of the present study, being a visionary and offering inspiring and ambitious goals is usually the most important feature of a creative leader, besides emotional intelligence. The survey results saw that there is a divided opinion on a vision's significance at ILME. Some participants see a clear vision as crucial, while others do not consider it as important to their daily work. I suggest re-thinking the vision of ILME as a whole, led by the CEO/owner. If creative leaders offer the vision instead of the head of the organization, it can feel detached. Here, as employee engagement for example in surveys is quite high, the vision could also be workshopped with ILME employees. This could ensure that the vision is both shared and personal to ILME employees. When a vision is solid and consistently promoted, it can be re-assessed whether it is important to ILME employees or not.

6.3 Further development ideas

It is suggested by the survey results to have more than one person to share the task of creative leadership according to their core competence in different areas of creative design. Having people share the tasks would increase the chances of having a person available to teams at all times. The persons – leaders – could develop the creative culture at ILME as a team, rather than one person having the task. Collaboration between leaders could include a shared creative “resources toolbox” to include best practices, methods and frameworks, which could be used in creative teams to ensure consistency and efficient management of time.

Clarity is a must, and I recommend clearly defining the roles and expectations for the leaders, as well as the time allocations for sparring and guiding teamwork. One idea could be to assign a leader for each client team, so that they could become familiar with the team and the client, and therefore be able to give consistent assistance over a longer timespan in accordance with the needs of the team. In the same vein, it could be a good idea to establish some goals and meters for creative leadership, for example concerning the number of

new, creative ideas emerging in teams, team satisfaction, and client satisfaction concerning ILME's creativity.

I suggest creating new possibilities and platforms for different client teams to learn from each other. Here leaders would help in facilitating conversation, identifying key problems to solve, and creating a safe environment for expressing ideas and opinions. Leaders could also help the teams in selling and pitching ideas to clients. Encouraging conversation and sharing experiences and problems would help organizational learning and ensure that creatives and creative teams do not feel alone with their challenges such as difficult tasks, selling ideas, efficiency issues or lack of motivation. Recognizing issues early-on would help solve them before problems escalate, and help in finding the right processes and structures each team is looking for.

If these development ideas are introduced, and the points of further discussion are considered with the ILME team, the organization has a very good basis to build on. Implementing the ideas would give a clear message that employees are seen and heard, and that their concerns are taken seriously. By solving these current issues collaboratively, we can also ensure that the leaders have the best chances to succeed in their work.

7 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to determine whether a best practice for leading and enabling creativity at ILME could be established to meet the needs of the creative designers and account directors of the agency. I suggested that at times, financial pressures limit the time spent on creative design at ILME, leading to favouring safe solutions rather than seeking innovative ideas. The survey results strongly support the presupposition.

The study showed a clear need for creative leadership that provides structure, support and encouragement for creativity. Moreover, key areas of development were found to support organizational growth and success. By integrating insights from creative leadership theories and employee perspectives from prior case studies and the present study, this thesis contributes to understanding how creative organizations can foster creativity without sacrificing efficiency. Consequently, the findings of this study can be relevant not only for ILME but also for other creatively ambitious organizations aiming to balance creative and financial performance. To have more impact, future research could explore comparative studies between organizations, and widen the qualitative methods with interviews, for example.

On a personal level, conducting this research deepened my understanding of creative leadership, its requirements, and the complexities of leading creative professionals. It gave me the privilege of finding what my colleagues think about creative work, and the chance to make a positive impact on developing ILME as a business and as a creative organization both collaboratively and via capable leadership.

Ultimately, I find that good creative leadership is invaluable, and it has the potential to transform not only individual organizations, but also the creative industries at large. By investing in organizational collaboration, and leaders who inspire, enable, and guide, new levels of creativity, innovation, and success can be unlocked.

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Appendix 1: Survey to ILME employees. Original survey in Finnish and translation to English.

Hei kollega!

Teen YAMK-opinnäytetyötä Turun ammattikorkeakoulun taideakatemiaan. Opintoissani ja lopputyössäni tutkin luovien asiantuntijaorganisaatioiden hallinnointia ja johtamista. Työni tavoite on luoda ILMEelle luovan työn johtamisen ja kehittämisen suositus tai malli. Käytän suosituksen tai mallin ensisijaisena datapohjana tutkimustietoa sekä tämän kyselyn tuloksia.

Voit vastata kyselyyn sekä henkilökohtaisesta kokemuksestasi ja työstäsi käsin että asiakkuustiimiesi kautta. Vastauksesi käsittelem vain minä, eikä yksittäisiä vastauksia jaeta muille tahoille. Kyselyn lopussa voit antaa suostumuksesi vastausten käsittelyyn.

Osio 1. Pohjatiedot (vapaaehtoiset)

Oletko ensisijaisesti

- Suunnittelija
- Asiakkuusjohtaja, tai muu asiakkuuksista vastaava henkilö

Oletko työskennellyt Ilmeellä

- 0-3 vuotta
- 3-5 vuotta
- 5-10 vuotta
- 10 vuotta tai enemmän

Oletko työskennellyt muissa luovan alan työpaikoissa, tai luovana suunnittelijana muissa yrityksissä tai organisaatioissa kuin Ilmeellä?

- Kyllä
- En

Jos vastasit ylläolevaan kysymykseen kyllä, voisitko kertoa, minkälaisia kokemuksia sinulla on luovan työn johtamisesta, ja sen erilaisista malleista aikaisemmissa työpaikoissasi? Avoin vastaus.

Osio 2. Sinä luovana suunnittelijana

1. Miten luovuus näkyy sinun työssäsi? Avoin vastaus
2. Mikä asioista löydät inspiraatiota luovaan työhön? Avoin vastaus
3. Pääsetkö käyttämään työssäsi luovuutta tarpeeksi? Onko jotain, mitä tahtoisit tehdä enemmän tai eri tavalla? Avoin vastaus
4. Mikä auttaisi sinua kehittymään luovassa työssä ja oppimaan uutta?

Osio 3. Ilmeen luovat tiimit

5. Kuvaile, kuinka luova työ tai prosessi toteutuu asiakastiimeissäsi. Avoin vastaus
6. Onko sinulla turvallinen olo ideoida ja ehdottaa asioita asiakkuustiimeissäsi? Avoin vastaus.
7. Koetko, että luovaa työtä johdetaan tiimeissä? Miten se ilmenee? Avoin vastaus
8. Oletko tyytyväinen tiimeihisi, vai toivoisitko niihin laajennusta tai ulkopuolista sparrausta?

Osio 4. ILME luovana työpaikkana

9. Miten parempi luova johtaminen ja luova työ tukisi ja mahdollistaisi ILMEelle parempaa liiketoimintaa?
10. Koetko, että Ilmeen asiakkaat arvostavat luovuutta ja luovia ideoita, ja olisivat valmiita käyttämään niihin rahaa? Avoin vastaus
11. Koetko, että Ilmeellä on selkeä visio, jota kohti työskentelemme? Avoin vastaus.
12. Vaikuttaako tai vaikuttaisiko selkeä visio työsi merkityksellisyyteen? Avoin vastaus.

13. Koetko työsi merkitykselliseksi? Mikä tekisi siitä merkityksellisempää ja työpäivistäsi innostavampia? Avoin vastaus.

14. Toteutuuko Ilmeen slogan ”Rohkeus kasvaa” luovassa työssä tiimeissäsi?

15. Mitä luovaa työtä mahdollistavia asioita toivoisit lisää ILMEelle? Voit miettiä asiaa henkilökohtaisen kokemuksesi, työsi sekä asiakkuustiimiesi kannalta. Valitse neljä tärkeintä.

- Sparraus ILMEen ulkopuolisilta asiantuntijoilta
- Sparraus ILMEen omilta asiantuntijoilta
- Koulutukset, koko ILMEen henkilöstön
- Koulutukset, omien mielenkiinnon ja kehityskohteiden mukaan
- Luovaa työtä ILME-tasoisesti kehittävät vastuuhenkilöt tai luova johtaja
- Enemmän aikaresursseja luovaan suunnitteluun
- Enemmän tiimityötä luovassa suunnittelussa
- Laajemmat asiakkuustiimit
- Enemmän keinoja ja metodeja luovaan suunnitteluun
- Rohkeutta tiimiltä ideointiin ja luovempiin ratkaisuihin ja ehdotuksiin
- Rohkeutta asiakkaalta luovempien ratkaisujen ja ehdotuksien vastaanottamiseen
- Selkeämpi ILME-tasoinen visio ja missio, jota kohti työskennellä
- Selkeämmät prosessit suunnittelutyöhön
- Jotain muuta, mitä?

Avaa valintojasi, ja miksi ne ovat tärkeitä sinulle.

16. Mitä haasteita tunnistat luovalle työlle ILMEellä tällä hetkellä? Voit miettiä asiaa henkilökohtaisen kokemuksesi, työsi sekä asiakkuustiimiesi kannalta. Valitse neljä tärkeintä.

- Liian vähäiset aikaresurssit
- Epämotivoivat asiakkuudet ja työt
- Talouspaineet ja numeroiden tarkastelu
- Prosessien puute
- Epäselvä visio ja missio
- Ideoinnin vaikeus pitkissä asiakkuuksissa
- Epäselvät briefit asiakkaalta
- Asiakkaiden haastavuus ja hankaluus
- Epäselvät tiimijaot ja vastuunjako sisäisesti
- Ristiriidat, huono tunnelma ILMEellä
- Ristiriidat, huono tunnelma tiimeissä
- Ammattitaidon puutteellisuus
- Ei uskalleta tai osata ideoida ja ehdottaa rohkeita luovia ratkaisuja
- Ei uskalleta tai osata tarjota uutta ja kasvattaa asiakkuuksia
- Etänä työskentely vaikeuttaa töitä
- Toimistolla työskentely vaikeuttaa töitä
- Jotain muuta, mitä?

Avaa valintojasi, ja miksi ne ovat tärkeitä sinulle.

17. Onko jotain luovaan suunnitteluun liittyvää, mikä menee hyvin ja mistä tahdot antaa positiivista palautetta? Avoin vastaus

Osio 5, Luovan työn vastuhenkilöt

18. ILMEessä tullaan kokeilemaan luovan työn vastuhenkilöä tai -henkilöitä (nimike ei tiedossa).

- a) Mitä toiveita sinulla on tuleville vastuhenkilöille? Millaista tukea tarvitset? Minkälaisia taitoja toivoisit vastuhenkilöillä olevan? Avoin vastaus.
- b) Onko jotain luovan työn vastuhenkilöihin liittyvää, mikä pohdituttaa tai mitä et halua?

19. Alla on erilaisia johtajuuteen ja johtamistyyliin liittyviä erityispiirteitä. Mitä seuraavista ominaisuuksista toivot erityisesti luovan työn vastuuhenkilöltä? Valitse viisi mielestäsi tärkeintä ominaisuutta.

- Tunneälykyys ja hyvät ihmissuhdetaidot
- Kaukokatseisuus ja visionäärisyys
- Erityinen luovuus ja kekseliäisyys
- Objektiivisuus ja puolueettomuus
- Innostavuus ja inspiroivana motivaattorina toimiminen
- Karismaattinen, uskottava esiintyjä
- Valmentava sparraaja
- Päätäväinen ja määrätietoinen
- Aktiivinen ja aloitekykyinen
- Monipuolinen kokemus luovalta alalta
- Laaja keinovalikoima esimerkiksi luovaan ideointiin
- Kyvykyys luoda turvallinen ilmapiiri
- Hyvät verkostot
- Eettinen ja luotettava
- Joustava ja muutoskykyinen
- Kuuntelee ja osallistaa tasapuolisesti
- Osaava ongelmanratkaisija
- Psykologisesti kyvykäs ja ihmisyyttä ymmärtävä
- Kysyy oikeita kysymyksiä
- Monimutkaisien asioiden ja haasteiden selkeyttäjä
- Kunnianhimoinen kirittäjä
- Aktiivinen antamaan ja pyytämään palautetta
- Väsymätön luovuuden puolustaja

Avaa valintojasi, ja miksi ne ovat tärkeitä sinulle

20. Sana on vapaa – kerro mitä sinulla on mielessä aiheeseen liittyen, mitä ei tullut kyselyssä esiin.

Osio 5. Vastauksiesi käyttöoikeudet

Saako avoimia vastauksiasi käyttää lainauksina opinnäytetyön tekstiosuudessa?

- Kyllä
- Ei

Vapaaehtoinen optio. Jos haluat käyttää vastauksiasi asiakkuustiimiesi kehittämiseen, voit kertoa alla, mitä asiakkuustiimejä vastauksesi koskee. Vastauksiasi ei jaeta tiimeihin suorina, mahdollisesti tunnistettavina lainauksina, vaan ylätason toiveina ja palautteena. Voit jättää kentän tyhjäksi, jos et halua mainita tiimejä.

Kiitän ajastasi ja panoksestasi kyselyyni ja tutkimukseeni. Jaan löydökset kanssanne opinnäytetyön valmistuttua.

English translation of survey:

Hi colleague!

I am working on my Master's thesis for the Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy. In my studies and thesis, I am examining the management and leadership of creative expert organizations. My goal for the thesis is to create a recommendation or model for ILME for leading and developing creative work. I will use a theoretical background and the results of this survey as the basis for the recommendation and/or model.

You can respond based on your personal experience working at ILME, as well as from the perspective of your client teams. I will be the only one processing your responses, and individual answers will not be shared with anyone. At the end of the survey, you can give your consent for the processing of your answers.

Section 1: Background information (Optional)

Are you primarily:

- A designer/creative
- An account manager or other person responsible for client relations

How long have you worked at ILME?

- 0-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10 years or more

Have you worked in other creative industry roles, or as a creative designer in companies or organizations other than ILME?

- Yes

- No

If you answered yes, could you describe your experiences with leadership of creative work in previous workplaces? (Open response)

Section 2: You as a creative designer

1. How is creativity present in your work? (Open response)
2. What inspires your creativity? (Open response)
3. Do you get to use creativity enough in your work? Is there something you'd like to do more or differently? (Open response)
4. What would help you grow as a creative, and to learning new things and skills? (Open response)

Section 3: Creative teams at ILME

5. Describe how creative work or processes are implemented in your client teams. (Open response)
6. Do you feel safe to share ideas and suggestions in your client teams? (Open response)
7. Do you feel that there is creative leadership in your teams? How does this show? (Open response)
8. Are you satisfied with your teams, or would you like to see them expanded or get support from other colleagues besides team members?

Section 4: ILME as a creative workplace

9. How would developing creative work support better business for ILME?
10. Do you feel ILME's clients value creativity and creative ideas, and are willing to invest in them? (Open response)
11. Do you feel that ILME has a clear vision we are working towards? (Open response)

12. Does or would a clear vision impact your work? (Open response)

13. Do you find your work meaningful? What would make it more meaningful and your workdays more exciting? (Open response)

14. Is ILME's slogan, "Courage to Grow," manifested in creative work within your teams?

15. What aspects would you like to see more of at ILME to support creative work? Consider this from your personal experience, your work, and your client teams' perspectives. Select the four most important:

- External expert coaching
- Coaching from ILME colleagues
- Company-wide training/learning sessions
- Training/learning opportunities based on personal interests and development goals
- Designated leaders or creative directors to develop creative work at the ILME level
- More time resources for creative planning
- More teamwork in creative planning
- Larger client teams
- More tools and methods for creative planning
- Encouragement from the team for ideation and more creative solutions and proposals
- Willingness and courage from clients to consider more creative solutions and proposals
- A clearer ILME-level vision and mission to work towards
- Clearer processes for planning

- Something else, what?

Please explain your choices and why they are important to you.

16. What challenges do you currently recognize in creative work at ILME? Think about this from your personal experience, your work, and your client teams' perspectives. Select the four most important:

- Insufficient time resources
- Demotivating clients and tasks
- Financial pressures and focus on numbers
- Lack of processes
- Unclear vision and mission
- Difficulty generating ideas in long-term client relationships
- Unclear briefs from clients
- Challenging and difficult clients
- Unclear team structure and internal division of responsibilities
- Conflicts, poor atmosphere at ILME
- Conflicts, poor atmosphere within teams
- Lack of expertise
- Hesitancy or inability to propose bold creative solutions
- Hesitancy or inability to offer new ideas and grow client relationships and develop client accounts
- Challenges with remote work
- Challenges with office work

- Something else, what?

Please explain your choices and why they are important to you.

17. Is there something related to creative planning that is going well and for which you'd like to give positive feedback? (Open response)

Section 5: Creative leadership

18. ILME is going to experiment with one or more persons responsible for developing creative work (job title yet unknown).

a) What expectations do you have for these persons? What support do you need? What skills would you like them to have? (Open response)

b) Is there anything related to these persons that concerns you or that you would not want? (Open response)

19. Below are characteristics related to leadership and management styles. Which five qualities do you consider most important for a creative leader?

- Emotionally intelligent with good interpersonal skills
- Insightful and visionary thinking
- Exceptionally creative and inventive
- Objective and impartial
- Inspirational and motivational
- Charismatic, credible presenter
- Coach and supporter
- Decisive and determined
- Proactive and takes the initiative
- Diverse experience in the creative field

- Broad range of tools for creative ideation
- Ability to create a safe environment
- Strong networks
- Ethical and trustworthy
- Flexible and adaptable
- Listens and includes everyone equally
- Skilled problem solver
- Psychologically skilled and understanding of human nature
- Asks the right questions
- Able to clarify complex issues and challenges
- Ambitious go-getter who pushes the team to exceed themselves
- Actively gives and requests feedback
- Tireless advocate for creativity

Please explain your choices and why they are important to you.

20. Open comments – share any thoughts related to the topic that were not covered in the survey.

Section 5: Usage Rights for Your Responses May your open responses be quoted in the text portion of the thesis?

- Yes
- No

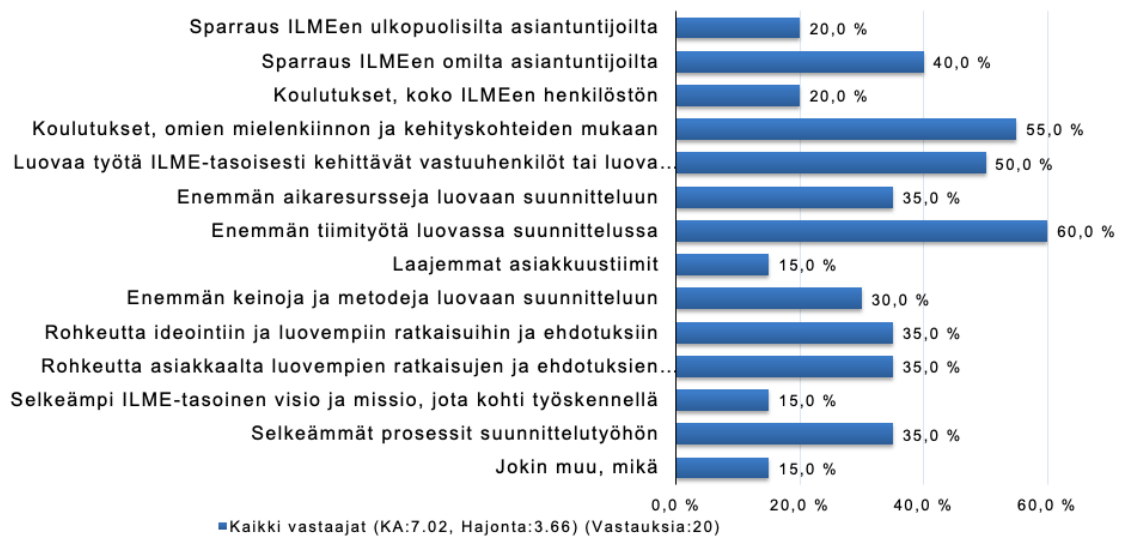
Optional: If you'd like to use your responses for the development of your client teams, you can specify below which client teams your responses concern. Your responses will not be shared directly with the teams in a way that could identify

you but rather as high-level feedback and suggestions. You can leave this field blank if you prefer not to mention specific teams.

Thank you for your time and input in my survey and research. I will share the findings with you once the thesis is completed.

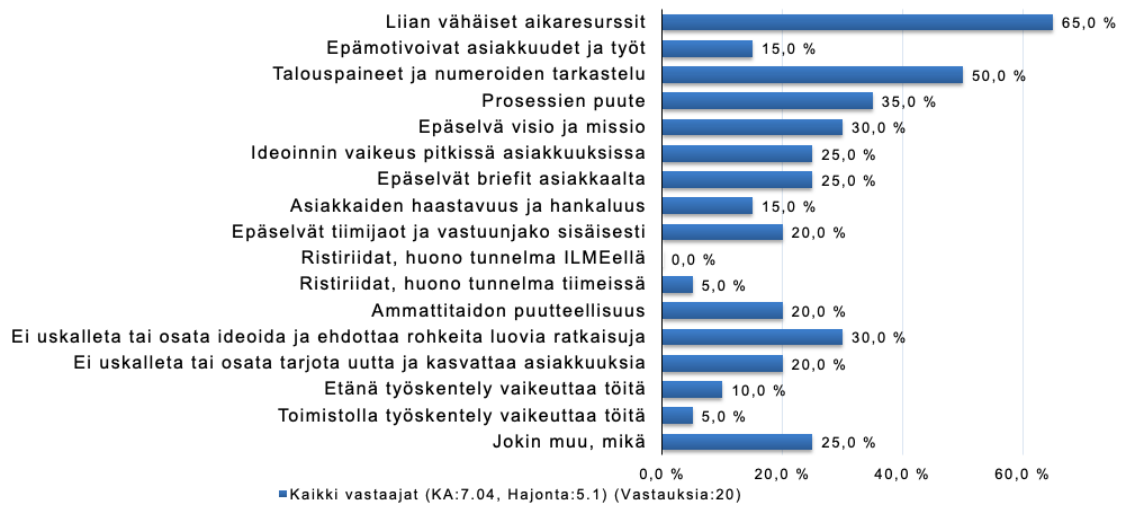
Appendix 2, Figure 1: What would support creative work at ILME? Original graph in Finnish.

Mitä luovaa työtä mahdollistavia asioita toivoisit lisää ILMEelle? Voit miettiä asiaa henkilökohtaisen kokemuksesi, työsi sekä asiakkuustiimiesi kannalta. Valitse neljä tärkeintä.



Appendix 3, Figure 2: Challenges for creative work at ILME. Original graph in Finnish.

Mitä haasteita tunnistat luovalle työlle ILMEellä tällä hetkellä? Voit miettiä asiaa henkilökohtaisen kokemuksesi, työsi sekä asiakkuustiimiesi kannalta. Valitse neljä tärkeintä.



Appendix 4, Figure 3: Characteristics of creative leaders. Original graph in Finnish.

Alla on erilaisia johtajuuteen ja johtamistyyliihin liittyviä erityispiirteitä. Mitä seuraavista ominaisuuksista toivot erityisesti luovan työn vastuuhenkilöltä? Valitse viisi mielestäsi tärkeintä ominaisuutta

