

Don't let robots take your job, boost your creative thinking!

 By Leigh Andrews

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In addition to his role at Mirum and chairman of Red & Yellow, digital marketing pioneer Rob Stokes is father to four children under the age of five. Little wonder his thoughts often turn to their future and the impact of AI on the world as we know it. Here's why it's crucial to hone your creative thinking skills.

Head of Programme Tracy Lynn Chemaly kicked off the second day of Business of Design by pointing out that she'd overheard attendees noting they had trouble sleeping the night before as they had so many thoughts running through their heads. She then introduced Rob Stokes, Red & Yellow chairman as MC for the day, with a presentation sure to keep other attendees awake at night.



Rob Stokes.

That's because Stokes explained why creative thinking is the most important skill of the 21st century. Certainly something to think about. He admitted that he may well have been preaching to the choir on the topic, but there was frantic note-taking all around me, so the message really hit home. Stokes made the session personal by sharing how he had slowly but surely become disillusioned with the industry he was in and, after fathering four children, his thoughts turned to the world we are leaving to the next generation. He emerged from an existential crisis. It wasn't what the industry did but the way it did it that irked.

When having a quiet moment with our 'supercomputers' or smart phones, Stokes says we don't realise they're more powerful than the tech that took man to the moon; we forget how far we've come. As a parent, AI is of particular interest to him as it will replace most of the world we know today, so how will the next generation work?

This amazing advancement is technically destroying all the legal jobs in the world, says Stokes. It is already in use by the biggest firms in the world, currently taking on the role of paralegals. But it's not all doom and gloom. The jobs that get automated first follow a pattern – it's the non-routine manual ones that go first, but non-routine cognitive is still on the rise, so creative work is a relatively safe bet for the future.

Like an emergency or unplanned medical condition to treat, it's innovation at heart.

Here's why:

- Computers can never be human, we hope
- Only humans have emotion, we think
- And only humans have empathy, we think

Computers don't live in our world and have our experiences, so simply being human is our competitive advantage over them.

Creativity in business is about spotting opportunities, making existing products or services better and applying a creative mindset to the opportunities and challenges that exist. It's the logical business thinkers who can apply creativity to the situations they face that will succeed.



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Unfortunately, we are still teaching the new batch of workers the previous ways of work.

To be creative is to be human

Stokes shares the following eight ways to think more creatively:

1. Have **belief that you can be creative** – it's a broad spectrum and we often pigeon-hole ourselves on the outside, but intuition is very underrated, Stokes calls it creativity's guiding star.
2. **Find purpose** – this is powerful as it's inspired the reason for creativity, those that happen undirected, without a deadline are often the best ones.
3. **Embracing curiosity**, like the Red and Yellow 'I am a sponge' sign that has been up for 23 years, it is the hardest aspect to activate internally. It helps you connect the often disparate dots. But this does not mean obsessing over the news cycle and trawling through the same rubbish online repeatedly.
4. **Seek domain knowledge** to innovate in your industry, but beware of being myopic – don't focus on your video business so well that you don't see [Netflix coming](#). They don't disappear from stupidity or lack of productivity, they disappear as they can't see beyond their current workflow.
5. **Reject more rules**, don't go with the status quo. Innovation happens when you ask 'why' and 'does it have to happen this way?' Most rules don't actually exist.
6. Use a great idea evolution process, like design-thinking. Just **writing down an idea** is a powerful step – but separate the writer from the editor in your head, so there's flow. Also beware of [cognitive biases](#).

7. Force the discipline to **say no**, especially to your own ideas.
8. **Create space for ideas**, whether that be 'bed, bath, bus or booze'.

That's just a taste of the current flavour of design-thinking. [Click here](#) for our Business of Design coverage, and be sure to follow [@busofdesign](#) for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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