

OF LEGO AND BUTTERFLIES The agile art of transforming insights

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Lego is a new toy every day. It is what it is – fundamental building blocks that can be put together as you like – no constraints, no fetters; actually, just one – your imagination.

Butterflies put themselves together differently over their lifecycle, morphing from larva to beautiful creatures.

Even in the field of science, we find reactions differ based on the conditions : Zinc and Nitric Acid react in different ways producing different outputs, based on temperature and concentration.

What can the insights industry learn from this?

Agility - of thought, action, mindset and delivery

First off, the business imperative - We need to recognise that clients have problems and challenges and they need answers quickly and decisively – the methods that we obsess with, the frameworks that we hold dear are less important than the directions that they help us to provide.

So, given our traditional structures of qualitative and quantitative research, social media monitoring, digital, insight mining etc, each with their individual objectives, revenue and P&L targets, do we deliver and delight in this brave new world? First, we have to learn how to become method agnostic and use every piece of information that helps answer the question. We need to recognise that frameworks and models are mere tools: means to an end, important but not our reason to exist.

Second, agility is as much structural as it is a way of thinking, so we structure ourselves differently. Do we have the courage to break down walls and create an agile ecosystem? What are possible eco systems? What can we learn from within our current ecosystem and from other industries? How do we create an agile ecosystem that allows us to focus on external business problems and challenges rather than our internal business compulsions, with everyone working to a common goal?

We need to reorient our thinking to the fact that all our “functional” verticals are skill options and nothing else. We need the mental agility to go back to being customised in our approach for each new problem, each new challenge – and have the agility to put together the skills to create new and relevant solutions, somewhat like the software industry does.

Third, can we reorient our thinking to focus on external business problems rather than our own internal compulsions? Our only purpose is to inform decisions -meaningfully, decisively, quickly and anything that impedes this has to change. Creative disruption proactively is what helps us create value and stay relevant as an industry. To be agile means to be simple. And no one said simple was easy.

What is your point of view on this?