

Same same, but different!

 By [Candy Dempers](#), issued by [MediaHeads 360](#)

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As people we generally like what we know, hence you'll find the golden arch restaurant in Venice, Italy, packed with tourists, even though there are delicious local dishes all over the city. When searching for entertainment we also tend to search for things that are familiar.

This concept is known as the "Familiarity Principle", which is the human tendency to develop a preference for things (be it people, products, ideas or food) which we see often.

Investing time into the untested, be it an author, film director, musician or radio show, is daunting on a subconscious level and is why Bruce Springsteen sang *57 Channels... and nothing on!* When subjected to someone else's TV choices, how many times have you "found" a show you enjoy? The diversity of choice, curated by someone you trust enough to watch TV with, opened a new option to you. This is creative diversity.

Creativity is the process of bringing something new into being by combining two or more pieces of information together to form something useful to solve a problem. It follows that the more diverse the ideas available, the more creative the solutions will be.

Much has been written about the echo chamber phenomenon, which promulgated the Trump Presidency and Brexit in the UK. While the internet has a multitude of choices, we are subconsciously drawn to the familiar. The familiar being people that look and sound like us, who by and large also share our own views and biases. The lack of fresh ideas in these echo chambers lead to stagnated creativity and dull solutions. The challenge is to create an environment in which diverse ideas are not only heard but actively workshopped. This challenge is a human one and must be actively pursued to ensure creative diversity.

Jeffrey Baumgartner, author of the book, *The Way of the Innovation Master*, says that success in business lies in the ability to be diverse at different levels, including diversification in personal creativity and diversification in teams. The former posits that if you're looking to generate more creative ideas to solve a problem, the best thing you can do is to diversify your thinking, while the latter suggests that teams using personal creativity-diversity techniques generate more creative ideas in groups.

In my mind the magic happens when teams who have the personal and team elements above, find the creative solutions that overlap across diverse elements of personal influence. The line is often very fine and is found through rigorous discussion, comparison and argument. There is, however a salient moment when the divergent ideas meet in a moment of creative clarity and the team know that they have the solution that is required.

In an ever-changing marketplace with unique challenges and nuances, it is essential for companies that offer creative services to actively seek diversification in teams. At Mediaheads 360 as we Activate, Captivate and Amplify, we continually look to generate a myriad of concepts or ideas that speak to the creative problem. After compiling a mass of thoughts, we then combine and build new streams of thinking to solve the end challenge. I love the energy and our ability to have common creative purpose from diverse starting points.

In South Africa the diversity of our people should be seen as an asset to creative problem-solving. At the base of the South African Coat of Arms is the motto, *!ke e: /xarra //ke*, written in the Khoisan language of the /Xam people. When translated into English, the phrase means, "Diverse People Unite". I believe that in the creative space, we are seeing the green shoots of differing people coming together to solve our many problems. Beautiful concepts, ideas and solutions are adding value through the creative economy on a daily basis to drive both tangible and non-tangible value.

As a manager of a team it is important to allow for creative process, and as a member of a creative team it is equally important to allow the flow of ideas from diverse places. What can one do to ensure creative diversity? These are some of my thoughts:

- The first idea is not the only idea. Generate more than you need, park ideas and concepts for reference. Be naturally curious and understand that making mistakes or failing also contributes to positive creative momentum.
- Accept that often a collective creative process is better than individual thinking and that ideas must sometimes be combined for the best outcome. Your idea may not be the end product but helped shape the process. (If you have nothing, make coffee, that always wins)
- Always solve the problem in the brief. Although brainstorm sessions often start off with several way-out ideas, always be cognisant of the problem at hand and ask yourself if the process is solving the problem. If not, refocus the approach but don't curb the creative output.
- Do things differently on a personal level. Expose yourself to ideas, places, thinking and people who go through life differently. Build networks of people and contacts that allow you to tap into zones of learning, discomfort and discovery. Don't be afraid to expand your horizons.
- Be aware of trends, outliers, events and great campaigns. Share these, talk openly and take the time to notice the world around you. Creative solutions are fed by continual curiosity for the world around us.
- Lastly, find a balance between creative input and creative output. When working in teams it is important to know what your role is, when the deadlines are and have the ability to translate diverse creative thinking into workable ideas. Practice your writing, challenge your mind and exercise your creative skill. Understand that time off is an essential part of the creative process.

At Mediaheads 360 we look forward to a year of creative discovery and seeing our team bring their diverse thinking, opinion and exposure to the fore. I'm excited to contribute to our sessions and brainstorming and allow our diversity to unite our ideas, solutions and thinking for creative problem-solving.

ABOUT CANDY DEMPERS

Candy Dempers has loved all things media for twenty-three years. A sales and marketing specialist, her first love was radio and bringing brands and platforms together.

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