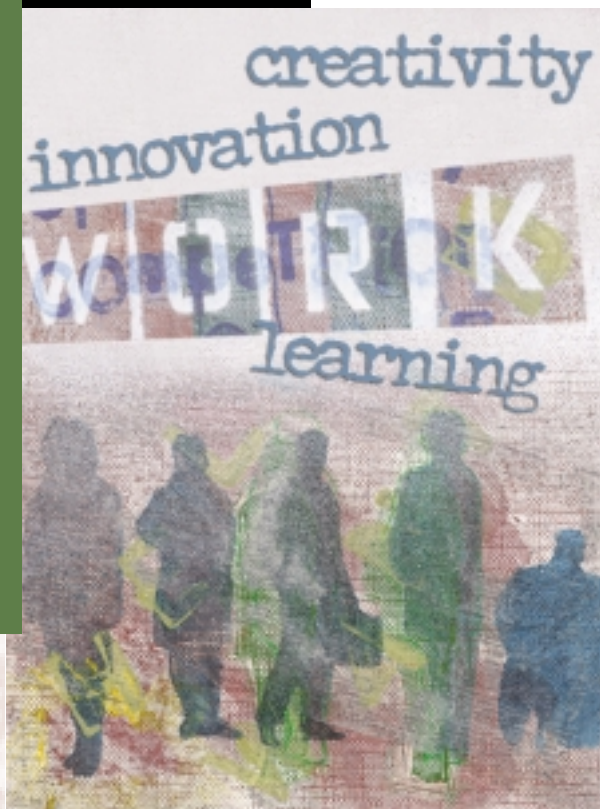


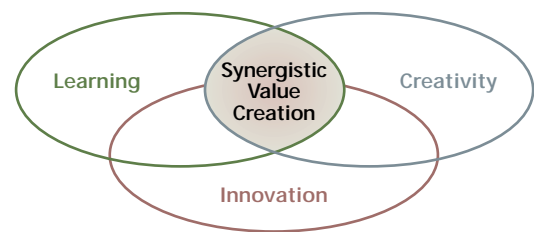
# Creating

## The critical linkages



***In today's knowledge-based economy, for-profit and not-for-profit organizations alike are well aware that continuous learning, creativity, and innovation are essential to their success. While these three elements are important individually, the leverage created through the coordination and integration of all three has exponential benefits, or synergistic value.***

*By Kevin Yousie  
and Nimira Harjee*



### What is Synergistic Value?

Simply put, synergistic value is the combined outcome in terms of economic or other benefits (e.g. market share, customer satisfaction scores, engagement, etc.) created when an organization's learning, creative, and innovation resources, skills, and processes are managed, integrated, and leveraged for exponential benefit. This is depicted in the following simple equation:

$$\text{Synergistic Value} = \text{Value Created via Learning} \times \text{Value Created via Creativity} \times \text{Value Created via Innovation}$$

Given that each of the three elements in this formula is multiplied together mathematically, a zero value for any one element will result in a zero synergistic value.

### The Key Elements

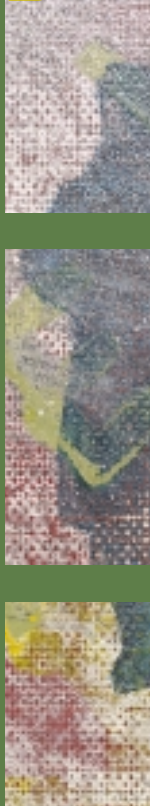
Learning is typically thought to take place when a skill is acquired or when new knowledge is gained. At a basic level, learning addresses how best to do something, how something works, or how to perform explicit tasks or activities. At a higher level, real learning which results in more profound understanding and behaviour change only occurs through in-depth query, reflection, and internalization. Learning is a requisite for value-added creativity and innovation.

Creativity is the process of generating possibilities. It is thinking of new things and seeing existing things in different ways. The creative process is an exciting one as it enables new possibilities in terms of products, services, and processes to emerge. Knowledge and learning are important inputs into the creative process. Creativity in and of itself may not add value to an organization. An effective innovation process is required to transform ideas into reality.

Innovation is the conversion of ideas and possibilities into tangible new products, processes, and opportunities. Innovation is required to create true value and to implement changes in how things are done. Innovation does not occur in isolation. It is driven by both creativity and learning.

# synergistic value: between learning, creativity

# and innovation



## Interdependencies

**Learning and Creativity:** An idea or creative process that has at its foundation outdated, inadequate, or incorrect knowledge is likely to disintegrate under the weight of reality, especially in today's continuously changing and competitive environment. A sustained investment in learning and development ensures an organization's key resource, human capital, remains current and retains a prolonged shelflife. Beyond that, it is often the learning process that unleashes untapped creativity and potential through additional awareness, insight, and reflection.

**Creativity and Innovation:** Organizations require skills, disciplines, and experience to achieve successful innovation. Without these, the potential benefits that might be achieved through the implementation of a new creative idea will never be attained. In addition, considerable organizational energy can be expended for relatively little gain. Just as innovation is required to bring creative ideas to life, creativity applied appropriately in the innovation process will enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and the final outcomes associated with innovation. If done well, this can distinguish or differentiate an organization in the market-place in terms of things such as faster time to market, lower cost due to less waste or rework, enhanced product functionality, or a more appealing design from the customer's perspective.

**Innovation and Learning:** Learning is required in order for an organization to innovate and implement successfully. With experience, innovation becomes easier, more efficient, and effective. However, on-going learning is required to ensure the most appropriate technologies, processes, and procedures are incorporated into the innovation process in order to maximize the anticipated benefits and produce sustained results. Learning from past mistakes is also an important aspect of continuous improvement in innovation. Similarly, innovation in learning and learning processes will also generate exponential benefits. Applying innovative approaches and technologies in learning can accelerate the pace and reach of learning, resulting in tangible benefits for the organization.

## Common Characteristics

Not only are there interdependencies between learning, creativity, and innovation, all three flourish under very similar conditions – in collaborative, empowering, open, and trusting environments where knowledge is easily shared, transferred, leveraged, and renewed. Learning and creativity often follow a non-linear path and are enhanced through a social component – discussion, debate, and interaction with others. All three may also involve taking risks, demonstrating courage, challenging

previous assumptions, or making connections through different perspectives. Diversity is an important element in this value creation process.

## Organizational and Individual Impact

Synergistic value created through the integration of learning, creativity, and innovation has an impact at both the organizational and individual levels. Benefits accrue to both as shown in the following table:

Organizational Impact	Individual Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Enhance collective competence and raise overall performance.</li><li>▪ Enable breakthrough thinking and new development.</li><li>▪ Build new knowledge based on previous knowledge.</li><li>▪ Increase adaptability.</li><li>▪ Increase the overall acquisition of new skills/knowledge.</li><li>▪ Enable advanced application of existing knowledge.</li><li>▪ Enable knowledge to be shared/leveraged and new knowledge to be created.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Increase individual capability.</li><li>▪ Improve confidence and strengthen individual ability to take risks and try/do new things.</li><li>▪ Reframe individual thinking.</li><li>▪ Decrease lethargy and complacency.</li><li>▪ Increase personal satisfaction, pride, and esteem.</li><li>▪ Enable individuals to get/gain acceptance through endorsed credentials.</li><li>▪ Improve insight, thought, and perspective to augment existing knowledge.</li></ul>

## Conclusion

Learning, creativity, and innovation enable an organization to survive and thrive. Individually, all three receive considerable attention and are highly regarded as key organizational strengths. However, their value is often minimized when their potential is looked at in isolation and not collectively or holistically. In today's knowledge-based economy, organizations must actively and consciously look for opportunities to create synergistic value by combining all three. One way to facilitate this is to create environments where they can inter-react, integrate, and flourish.

**Kevin Yousie** is a Banff Centre faculty member and President of Crosswater Partners based in Toronto. **Nimira Harjee** is Director of Learning in the Knowledge Network at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

For additional articles, visit our Web site at [www.banffleadership.com](http://www.banffleadership.com).