

Dreamtelligence

The current economic, environmental and social climate is encouraging designers, planners, scientists, marketers and technology experts to invest in imaginative and playful thinking, say Sarah Rabia, Martin Raymond and Liz Hancock.

Additional research by Vicky Langdon



Carl Bolle elementary school, Berlin, by die Baupiloten

We are entering a new age driven by storytelling, dreams and play. In this era, what would once have been fantasy now becomes reality. From robotic cars that mimic the motion of schools of fish to avoid accidents, to mobiles that use avatar world interfaces to operate email, phone calls and SMS; from machines designed to trap rainbows in ways that enable us to create high-speed optical computers, to a 'jelly baby' made from liver cancer cells that allows anti-cancer drugs to be tested in an environment more closely resembling the human body – imagination is driving the next 50 years of change.

'The ability to dream, to spot what might otherwise be hidden, and to innovate to create what previously could only be imagined, will increasingly separate the winners and the losers,' says Scott Anthony, president of innovation consultancy Innosight and author of *The Silver Lining: An Innovation Playbook for Uncertain Times*.

DREAMTELLIGENCE DRIVERS

Global problems and economic uncertainties are forcing us to think beyond the logical, and to use our imaginations and intuition to identify visionary solutions for problems such as climate change, food shortages, global poverty, energy shortages, and religious and environmental fundamentalism.

There is a divide between the problems we face and the techno-scientific solutions we increasingly need to solve them. In his most recent book, *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity and the Renewal of Civilisation*, political and environmental scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon argues that not imagining the unimaginable will eventually make us lose our ability

to innovate or imagine our way out of the problems we are now facing. Setting forth a theory of the growth, crisis and regeneration of societies, he proposes that the breakdown of known societal systems opens up opportunities for bold and creative reform.

The age of Dreamtelligence calls on all aspects of the imagination, and draws on the creative spectrum to envision our way out of these problems. This is why the movement is being driven by artists, designers and storytellers alongside scientists, academics and philosophers.

'Nanotechnology, robotics, genetics and artificial intelligence are just some sectors experiencing exponential growth,' says Salim Ismail, executive director of Singularity University, the San Francisco school that aims to prepare scientists and technologists to dream up solutions for these times of change. Ismail believes his university is the only hope experts have of staying ahead of the racing developments in those industries. 'It's essential to be in touch with the most progressive within science in order to harness the knowledge and transform it into solutions for the demanding times ahead,' he says.

CROSS-POLLINATION

Collaborations abound. Material Beliefs is a London collective of designers who work with scientists, engineers, medical staff and sociologists to give biomedical and cybernetic technologies delightful pedestrian applications. Examples include carnivorous furniture, such as a lamp that doubles as a moth-eater; a device that allows users to observe and interrelate with a culture of brain cells; and a collection of pet toys that lets owners interact with and monitor their animals as they play.

The scope of the problems we face on a global scale today is forcing us to reach beyond the logical, and to use our imaginations and intuition to identify visionary solutions

Dreamtelligence as a movement is being driven by artists, designers and storytellers alongside scientists, academics and philosophers

We are entering a new era of communication, design and experience that puts emotions and dreams at the forefront of the marketplace

Design thinking, or creative problem solving, is emerging as a smart way to reconsider new ideas for business and society

Cross-cultural collaborations will increasingly help to challenge thinking, and to deliver new products, brands and services people have yet to dream about

The blurring of technology, science and fantasy is the inevitable result of living in an age when dreams themselves become the products consumers most covet

Play is also becoming synonymous with creativity, blue-skies thinking and problem-solving, especially in the once-tired world of global corporates

Dreamtelligence is a way to offer added value in a world where a product's narrative may be prized above the product itself

From packaging to products, we are witnessing a rise in the use of visual puns, playful colours and childlike characters to engage adults and children alike

While inspired by fantasy and dreams, Dreamtelligence will be increasingly liberated and realised by new technologies such as augmented reality



Le Whif chocolate inhaler by David Edwards in collaboration with Le Laboratoire

Elsewhere, Le Laboratoire is a Paris-based creative space dedicated to experimental collaboration between scientists and artists. The initiative organises lectures and a club, and runs a store open to the public. Viable fusions of hitherto disparate realms are resulting in discoveries that seek to change the way we perform common activities. Le Laboratoire's Le Whif is a chocolate product broken down into particles that proposes a new way of eating by breathing.

Meanwhile, IDEO has developed a bike that uses pedal power to purify water; similarly, One Laptop per Child's latest offering is a pedal-powered computer for developing countries. Nissan's experimental Eporo car uses biomimicry (the application of natural phenomena to human designs) to create robotic vehicles that communicate with one another, as would fish travelling in schools, to avoid traffic jams and accidents. And Little World is a mobile phone interface that behaves more like an avatar game. Created by Kevin Cannon and Tobias Toft, students at the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design, the interface's cartoon-like world sees users creating a contact book of characters - in place of the usual name and number listings - to which the user can 'speak' and send text messages.

'In times of change, we need new alternatives - new ideas,' said IDEO CEO Tim Brown at this year's TEDGlobal summit. 'Design may have its greatest impact when it's taken out of the hands of designers and put into the hands of everyone.' Brown, who is also the author of *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation*, believes that such creative problem-solving, or 'design thinking',

The age of Dreamtelligence calls on all aspects of the imagination, and draws on the creative spectrum to envision our way out of these problems

can be applied to a wide range of fields and issues, from bank service to airport security to delivering clean drinking water in the developing world. 'One of the most important ideas about design thinking is that it creates new ideas that provide new choices for business and society,' he recently wrote on his blog.

PLAY PLANNING

In his forthcoming book, *Dream Society: Next Generation*, Rolf Jensen, chief imagination officer of futures consultancy Dream Company, suggests that the blurring of technology, fantasy, science and play is the inevitable result of living in an age when dreams themselves become the products consumers most covet. 'We're at a tipping point,' Jensen says. 'We're getting tired of the rational. Our lives are over-regulated. What we are seeing now is emotions and dreams entering the marketplace.' We are, he says, moving away from brainstorming new ideas to 'dreamstorming' and 'heartstorming' new ways of making them happen.

This could explain why a host of mystery-based consumer ideas have hit the market in recent months, as we seek out experiences that present us with elements of surprise, chance and (hopefully) delight. At the Ogori Café in the Urban Design Centre in Kashiwa, Japan, customers are served the order placed by the person preceding them, making for ordering fun. Likewise, Mystery Google gives users the result for the search initiated by the last person who used the service before them.

Building this yearning for surprise and mystery into consumer products, German t-shirt brand Hipstery gets customers to answer a series of questions about themselves, then has its in-house

team select the t-shirt design that best suits that customer's personality and taste profile.

Most successful businesses came upon their winning ideas through flashes of insight that combine analysis and intuition, fantasy and reality, says William Duggan, senior lecturer at the Columbia Business School and author of *Strategic Intuition: The Creative Spark in Human Achievement*. These flashes of insight are the brain's mechanism for connecting the dots. 'It shouldn't be about 'What's your idea?', but 'Let's do a search around the world for pieces of a puzzle,' Duggan says. 'And it's OK to come up with ideas for problems you're not working on - this is how flashes of insight normally work.' Accordingly, Japanese artist Yuri Suzuki's 'Breakfast Machine' installation encourages play and collaboration by asking the public to help him build a machine that can make coffee, juice, omelettes and jammy toast - all by itself. Inspired by contraptions often featured in films, the project perfectly embodies the prevailing mood of making dreams reality.

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

Play is also becoming synonymous with creativity, blue-skies thinking and problem-solving, especially in the on-tired world of global corporates. 'What businesses continually tell us is that they need people with problem-solving skills,' says Mick Conway, a regional manager at Play England, a charity that promotes local play opportunities for children and young people. 'Play provides this and lateral thinking and the 'what if' approach. Play isn't always about boisterous activity,' he says, 'but thinking and dreaming and asking the 'why' questions of yourself.'



Perfume bubble wand by Maison Francis Kurkdjian

*Below: An installation of reflective components casts patterns and colour across the interior at the Carl Bolle elementary school, Berlin
Opposite: 'Field of Light', at the Eden Project, by Bruce Munro (photography Mark Pickthall)*



Interiors and large spaces have also been given the fantasy touch, with the likes of Bruno Munro's otherworldly 'Field of Light' installation transporting visitors into dreamlike spaces



Case studies

Company: LEGO's Play Parity

Sure, the classic toy manufacturer Lego has a headstart when it comes to play and fantasy, but the Danish company has been reinvesting these qualities into its brand strategy, and has begun diversifying into new product territories.

Lego discovered its Dreamtelligence when it accidentally sold flawed product, and the oddly coloured bricks became a symbol of good luck for the consumers who received them. 'Consumers enjoy finding flaws and irregularities in Lego, and wonder whether it was intentional,' says branding expert Martin Lindstrom, who is also the author of *Buyology: Truth and Lies About Why We Buy*. 'The mystery was not created by the brand, but by the consumer.' In fact, every year Lego recruits a selected group of 'ambassadors' from the public - committed fans who help to promote and create with Lego in return for research and launch insights.

Lego is now using new technology and a new generation's love of digital and low-tech toys to push the company's remit further: the toy maker recently released, in collaboration with Digital Blue, a Lego-block walkie-talkie, mp3 player and digital camera. Elsewhere, its Digital Box Kiosk, located in selected Lego stores, uses augmented reality to bring to life the contents of Lego boxes that consumers hold in their hands.

The company also takes its play ethos into the business community, with its licensed Lego Serious Play consultancy sessions. Such sessions typically see team members using Lego bricks to 'think through their fingers' - allowing for more lateral concept generation and insight.

Above left: Digital camera by Lego and Digital Blue

Method: IDEO's Design Thinking

IDEO CEO Tim Brown applies his Design Thinking ethos by using design skills, processes and creative problem-solving abilities to come up with innovative solutions to social and business problems. Front-line observations, brainstorming, storytelling, multidisciplinary idea generation, prototyping and experimentation are some of the many initiatives that, when blended with imbedded innovation, have helped to revolutionise IDEO's clients. Procter & Gamble, for example, increased the number of design managers by 500%, and implemented an innovation 'gym' to help get its management staff in Dreamtelligence mode. US health provider Kaiser Permanente has nurses and healthcare professionals constantly working on projects and concepts to improve patient care through user observation, rapid prototyping and solution brainstorming.

Above right: 'Aquaduct' water purification bicycle concept by IDEO



develop a living doll made from liver cancer cells that allows researchers to more accurately test the effects of new drugs on people.

BEAUTIFUL NONSENSE

Over the past few years, we've seen designers increasingly begin to address fantasy in their work. Jaime Hayón's 'Tournament' included giant chess pieces erected in Trafalgar Square; Nika Zupanc's 'Mrs Dalloway' mini hot plate was created to resemble a giant pocket watch or make-up compact case; and Studio Job, the Antwerp-based designers, give their work a distinctly 'Through the Looking Glass' feel by supersizing everything from teapots to candlesticks. Interiors and large spaces have also been given the fantasy touch, with the likes of Bruno Munro's otherworldly 'Field of Light' installation transporting visitors into dreamlike spaces.

From packaging to products, we are witnessing a rise in the use of visual puns, playful colours and childlike characters to engage adults and children alike in buying products as diverse as fortified water and snacks. For his newly launched product line, revered French perfumer Francis Kurkdjian offers scented bottles of bubbles among his collection of perfumes, candles and incense. The scented bubble blowing kits allow people to 'discover the world of fragrance while playing,' he says. Designed as spaces for office workers to hide or rest in, Jurjen van Hulzen's 'It Húske' range brings together a family of brightly coloured and childishly shaped cupboards that beg for corporate sessions of hide-and-seek. Inspired by tales such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*, the Kymera Magic Wand is a tv remote control designed to look like a magical

instrument. The device can be 'taught' the gestures users most commonly make with their standard remote.

Product designer Freddie Yauner likewise uses play, narrative and nonsense to take everyday objects to another level. His products include the world's highest-popping toaster, fastest clock and longest lipstick. 'Product design is becoming more narrative based, more about beautiful nonsense,' he says. 'My tutor [at the Royal College of Art] said the toaster was stupid and funny. I said, Isn't that nice? We have everything we need today. Therefore, you need a reason to make stuff. The narrative is the reason.'

Yauner says he would hate for his products to be mass produced because they are a critique on consumer excess. 'The point of Dreamtelligence is breaking the monotony,' he says. 'It is a critique and appreciation of what we have. These products break you from the consumer cycle and take you to an idle space, a fantasy world.'

Jensen, the Dream Company's imagination officer, agrees. 'We live in a fantasy world and we need to make products to fill it,' he says. 'Fantasy products may never materialise in the real world. They could be robot milk, a computer game or a concept car. The product is a by-product of a fantasy.'

AUGMENTED REALITIES

Dreamtelligence may be inspired by fantasy and dreams, but it will be increasingly liberated and realised by technology. Augmented reality (AR), the overlaying of computer-generated information via print-out AR markers onto the real world and vice versa, promises to truly blur fantasy and reality.

Above: 'Mrs Dalloway' mini hot plate; 'Konstantin Beta' toy vehicle; both by Nika Zupanc



'The Haunted Book' by Camille Scherrer



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'This is a big market because it's the convergence of two worlds,' says futurologist Ian Pearson, who believes AR will mean we can customise the way we experience environments and even people, using technology. For Pearson, there is no question that AR will become normal. 'People will do it because they can,' he says. 'You will be able to customise the world to fit your fantasy.'

Whether it's turning yourself into robot hero Optimus Prime by sticking AR marker print-outs onto your body (Transformers 2 promotion); controlling a moving sasquatch in your hands (Link Snacks campaign by Australian AR outfit Boffswana); or composing your own dance tracks on your tabletop by mixing sounds using AR markers (Wrigley's 5 promotion), this technology truly introduces elements of magic into brand campaigns.

German company Metaio's mobile AR application lets users tag their locations with personally created objects, allowing other users to encounter dragons or fairies, say, as they move about the city. 'The Haunted Book' by Camille Scherrer at ECAL, the University of Art and Design in Lausanne, utilises AR to 'embellish' a picture book with moving creatures and beautifully unsettling graphics. Spanish artist and architect Pablo Valbuena's 'Conde Duque' augmented sculpture makes use of video projections to give 3D objects an added dimension. In a similar vein, UK digital artists KMA recently initiated an urban games tournament across three cities. The digital designers used light and thermal imaging technology to enable athletes to compete in digital 'courts', which reacted to their movements and interactions with projected ball and cycle shapes.

UN-THINKING BUSINESS

Dreamtelligence promises to change the way we think about innovation and unleash it throughout the corporate world. 'Businesses have a very rational, top-down way of thinking that may not understand how wild and unpredictable R&D is,' says Richard Bronk, author of *The Romantic Economist: Imagination in Economics*. 'We need more imaginative leaps from our leaders. Blue-sky thinking shouldn't be compartmentalised to product development but applied to businesses as a whole.'

Over the past five years, executive search consulting firm Spencer Stuart has documented the innovation strategies of 25 organisations in multiple industries and countries. Researchers found that companies are an incubator for staff who simply replicate those above them rather than innovating. 'Rising stars realise that to be promoted, they need to mirror incumbent leaders,' the report authors said. 'Even when stellar external talent comes in, it is frequently drawn into the same anti-innovation culture that has been squelching internal talent.'

This unwillingness to take a risk is a natural human instinct - it feels uncomfortable. Brands must therefore start employing people with the skills for creating new market universes and fantasy worlds. 'I don't see it coming from advertising, which is becoming more rational,' says Dream Company's Jensen. 'I see it coming from the storytelling industries: books, movies, tv. Many reality tv shows already work in this way - they are creating new universes.'

Weird and wonderful cross-cultural collaboration should therefore be considered, he says. User-generated and

open-source brands will also come to the fore as we collaborate more with designers, artists, scientists and other creative collaborators to challenge thinking, as well as to deliver new products, brands and services people have yet to dream about.

The commercial age has gone as far as it can. In the Dreamtelligence era, where we trade in stories and dreams, consumers and brands will be defined by their imagination. Consumers are ready for extraordinary, unique, impossible things. In this new age, industry can make anything you want, but what it can't manufacture is fantasy - and that's where our imagination comes in.

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McDonald's McVillage, Bodegraven, the Netherlands, by Uxus



VIEWPOINT VIEW

Get ready for a new era of communication, design and experience that puts emotions and dreams at the forefront of the marketplace. With consumers seeking brands, products and events that delight, amaze and catch them off guard, it is important that companies explore ways to introduce Dreamtelligence principles into their offering. If customers are increasingly demanding their brands, products and services to be creative, fantastic, playful, dreamlike and technologically astonishing and wondrous, then the journey to building them must be equally wondrous, magical, playful and steeped in fantasy. Play, therefore, needs to become part of a brand's DNA on all levels. Brand play may first seem out of context or a novelty, but before long it could become as standard as corporate social responsibility. It also represents a real opportunity – whether it's about seeking out unlikely collaborations, incorporating elements of mystery and surprise into the brand offering, or using play to problem solve – for corporations to become fantastic and re-engage with consumers on an emotional level.

Remember: Dreamtelligence principles are not just for breaking the monotony and predictability of your output for consumers, they're also for breaking these mindsets in your workers. Hence, it's important that teams be given occasional freedom to think outside the parameters of reality. Every brainstorming session needn't be about delivering tangible outcomes, but should occasionally give the opportunity to creatively roam, with no feasibility boundaries or deliverables at the end.

In a changing universe, this approach will allow you to ask the questions nobody else is asking; assume the benefits being promoted are the ones least likely to eventually be adopted for people's own needs; and look to abstractions to deliver the concrete, or indeed a possible way forward. Rather than stewing over the answer to the question, make sure, instead, you're asking the right question in the first place.