

**MAKE IT WORK:**  
**PLAN B**  
**'LEFTOVERS'**  
**ON**  
**INNOVATION &**  
**CREATIVITY**

**BY DAPHNE DEPASSÉ**

**MAKE IT WORK:**

# **PLAN B INSIGHTS**

**PLAN B°**



# PREFACE

**T**his ebook contains a selection of Plan B ‘leftover’ blogs regarding innovation and creativity.

The basic content of the original Plan B website is translated and transferred to the (Dutch) website [depasse.nl](http://depasse.nl). A selection of the English blogs are bundled and recorded in e-books. This is one of them: about innovation and creativity.

This mini e-book contains some general blogs - called ‘leftovers’ because all other blogs were published in e-books around the themes ‘communication’ and ‘projects’. These are leftover blogs on innovation and creativity in general. Including a chapter full of video’s, tools and books on this subject.

If you are interested in creativity and innovation in business, we recommend reading the Plan B ebook for projects. [This e-book can be downloaded on this page - for free.](#)

The content in this ebook is universal and can be read without any knowledge of plan B. However, in case you are curious: check out the last chapter of this ebook for more free ebooks, including one on the introduction of Plan B.

Plan B is just what it says.  
It’s another path.  
For problem solving and innovation.  
Reshape the way you think.  
Unscrew the system and act different.  
Break through the status quo.

Enjoy your reading!

*xoxo Daphne Depassé*



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# 1. THE CERTAINTY TRAP

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**M**any organisations are aimed at certainty. And reliability. And predictability.

You can call this The Certainty Trap, because this mindset is one of the biggest obstacles for innovation. And it inhibits change. You simply cannot ignore change. Shift happens.

## THE SYSTEM

In many 'traditional' organisations, everything is aimed at certainty, reliability and predictability. We have an urge and desire for certainty. We feel uncomfortable with doubt, ambiguity, 'maybe' and 'opportunities'. We have a tendency to control it all; to reduce uncertainty: nothing should go wrong, we don't want to make any mistakes and we don't like risks. Owh, and we want proof. To be certain.

This urge for certainty and predictability is one of the biggest obstacles of innovation and change. New possibilities are almost the opposite of certainty; they always bring uncertainty, risk and stress. And because we feel uncomfortable with uncertainty, we prefer to continue what we always do – until we actually forced to change.

Thereby, with new things you have no guarantee that it works, no one can prove in advance whether it is valuable or useful. You may want to know in advance whether an idea will work, but with real innovational stuff, you simply can not know. So, what happens is that many new opportunities are discarded in advance, because it is it difficult to measure. Difficult to proof. But there simply is no innovation without uncertainty.

**We love innovation, but only if we can control it and nothing changes.** And in an uncertain world and in times of pressure the urge for certainty is reinforced. When we get the feeling of losing

control, the response is often: trying to get more grip and return to the safe zone, to what is known. Therefore it is not surprising that many organisations are **more focused on exploitation than on exploration**. Their goal is not to excel in innovation, but to protect the organisation. Organisations are talking a lot about how important it is to innovate. But meanwhile **everyone is paid to maintain the status quo**.

## WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

With this mindset you are not able to innovate or adapt and respond to changes. This wouldn't be a problem if the world wasn't changing, but let's face it: **nothing keeps its status quo**.

Organisations are in a constant state of flow. As some great thinkers say: the only certainty is change. Or: change is the only constant thing in life. You just cannot assume that what is good today, tomorrow still rocks. Our rapidly changing world is simply unpredictable. And certainty is an illusion ([here's a nice blog about this](#)). We just cannot predict and we cannot know. But there is no choice: we need to cope with change and innovation to survive in this fast changing world.

As Darwin said:

It's not the strongest of the species that survive,  
nor the most intelligent,  
but the one most responsive to change.

## UNSCREW THE SYSTEM

So, every organisation need to keep up (at least), innovate and change. You need to be able to change quickly enough, to innovate, to reinvent yourself and adapt to new situations. The world is constantly changing and is always full of uncertainties and unpredictability. That means moving from managing and controlling to dealing with continuous change.

To make this happen, we need to enrich our ways of thinking and acting, and learn to deal with uncertainty, unpredictability and unreliability. We could easily say things like "embrace it all", but this

isn't easy because of our 'control' mindset. We have to learn to embrace it.

That starts with learning to:

- \* develop a tolerance for ambiguity;
- \* live with (some) uncertainty;
- \* adapt and change, by acting like a living mechanism – continuously adapting to the changing world. (Call it whatever you want: adaptive, flexible, pliable or agile. We call this B Adaptive);
- \* let go of the fear of failure and the requirement for proof;
- \* try and experiment (we call this B Experimental);
- \* be brave (we love this one, it's one of our principles).

Just because: shift happens.

## 2. FEAR OF FAILURE

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**S**omehow, we know the value of failure and making mistakes. You know, it helps to grow, to learn and to innovate. Never fail to fail. So, why aren't we doing it? Learn (how) to fail.

### WHY FAILURE MATTERS

Most people know that failure matters. People like Richard Brandson, Tom Peters, Malcolm Gladwell, Stephen Covey; they all talk about this. Why? Because it helps you to grow, to learn and to innovate.

First of all, taking risks, experimenting and learning from mistakes are important aspects of **innovation**. Major innovations come from trying new things – in entirely new directions. The risk of failure is part of this. As Woody Allen says: “If you're not failing every now and again, it's a sign you're not doing anything very innovative.” (In a study on the durability of companies which were successful for over 100 years, one of the most important findings for success was ‘the tolerance to experiment in the margin’).

Second, experimenting and mistakes are important **to grow and learn**. Thomas Edison did over 9,000 experiments before he came up with a successful version of the light bulb. Failure to succeed. Thereby, mistakes could lead to **unforeseen opportunities**, could uncover blind spots in your understanding and ignite your imagination. It even can lead to serendipitous innovations (finding something unexpected and usable while you were looking for something totally different). [Take a look at these examples of failure that resulted in innovation.](#)

The key is: if you dare to fail, make mistakes and experiment, magical things could happen. It helps you to grow, to learn and carry out innovation.

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<sup>1</sup> \* Source: Otto Scharmer, MIT, Theory U.



## SO, WHY AREN'T WE DOING IT?

Why aren't we doing it? We maybe know about the value of failure, but it's not easy to take this stand and just do it. It requires a different mindset than we are used to.

We have a **fear of failure**. Nothing should go wrong, we **don't want to make any mistakes** and we **don't like risks**. We have a tendency to **want to control**. And this urge to control is coming from our need to reduce uncertainty (as mentioned in the previous chapter: the certainty trap). So, in most 'traditional' organisations, we stigmatise mistakes and we see risk as something that is detrimental. This mindset of **fear, embarrassment and intolerance of failure** inhibits our learning opportunities and hinders innovation. If the risk is too high, we look for an alternative that is less risky, or we decide to stop the whole thing. This mindset of control, avoiding mistakes and risks is an important reason why we are not "doing it". We are not used to act this way.

## LEARN HOW TO FAIL

Because of this 'control' mindset, it's not easy to embrace failure. We have to learn to learn from failure.

That means enriching the way we think and act.

Learn to deal with fear, with uncertainty and unpredictability.

Learn to make useful mistakes by learning from them (otherwise you end up with "bad" failure, which is one that's repeated). And learn to be brave.

Because failure is strength. It helps you to grow, to learn and to innovate. You just have to learn how to fail as soon, fast and cheap as possible.

## FOR THE CURIOUS

\* Check out this [Flipboard Magazine: all about Failure and making mistakes](#).

# 3. CREATIVE THINKING IN BUSINESS

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In our western society (business and education), we often focus on analytical and logical thinking. Creative thinking doesn't get a lot of attention. How come? And why should you care? This is why you need creative thinking.

## The System

Almost all of our attention goes to analytical thinking. That is just the 'traditional' way we (learn to) think and work. We hardly apply creative thinking in business or learn it at school. (*Watch this (brilliant) TED Talk of Sir Ken Robinson about this subject.*)

There could be **various reasons** why there is a lack of attention for creativity in our education and business worlds. Maybe it's because **we just don't get it** yet; stuck in old traditional ways. Maybe it's the word creativity; often only associated with **artistic creativity**. Maybe it's because **we do not understand creativity** and **don't know how to formally apply it** (creativity is often seen as some kind of mystical innate talent, something far from our analytical thinking, impossible to control...)

## Why should you care?

Whatever reasons there may be to ignore creativity, it is **an urgent imperative** - especially in times of economic crisis. Analytical thinking is extremely valuable, but with this kind of thinking we only refine existing knowledge. This works fine for incremental changes and minor improvements, but it will rarely lead to new ideas or possibilities. For (breakthrough) innovations, we need creativity.

**Progress depends heavily on creativity.** We need creativity to survive in today's world. And as Robinson says: "**Creativity is not some exotic, optional extra, it's a strategic issue**".<sup>2</sup>

## How to unscrew this system

We believe in acting different. We believe in going **beyond rational** and logic thinking and **enrich the current ways** with creative thinking. Adding and realising the **creative potential** in organisations and in schools. To create more value. To create better solutions.

Creativity is technically the ability to create something new; viewing things differently, acting differently and combine stuff to create new (business) value. Thinking in terms of 'what if ...!' or 'what can be'. Imagining what does not yet exist. *(In Plan B there is a special zone for this: B Creative).*



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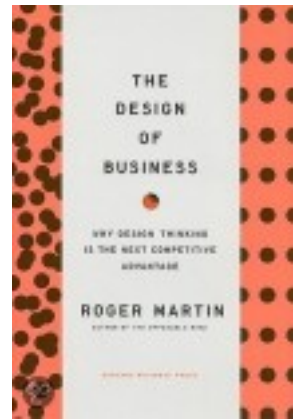
<sup>2</sup> source: [Fastcompany](#)

Progress depends heavily on creativity.  
That's why you need creative thinking.  
So, (learn to) think creative. B creative.  
Break through your status quo.

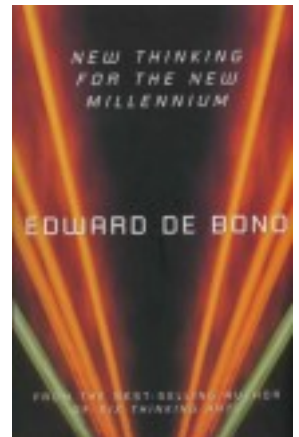
## FOR THE CURIOUS

**T**hree interesting books about Design Thinking (on which the Plan B method is inspired). To be applied in business.

This book, Design of Business, shows why Design Thinking is the next competitive advantage. The author, Roger Martin, explains that most companies have innovation envy and rely far too exclusively on analytical thinking, which merely refines current knowledge, producing small improvements to the status quo. Martin shows how to use design thinking in ways that produce breakthrough innovations and competitive advantage. Filled with great insights, new perspectives and lots of examples from companies. You can order this book at [Bol.com](http://Bol.com).



In this book "New Thinking For The New Millennium" Edward de Bono shows that the way we think is no longer sufficient. In the changing world we live in, there is a need for another kind of thinking. We need to learn to think in 'what can be' in stead of 'what is', with analysis, criticism and argument. The new thinking is thinking that is creative and constructive, by designing a way forward. As he says: "You can analyse the past, but you need to design the future." You can order this book at [Bol.com](http://Bol.com). Or in another, similar version, with the title "Think, before it's too late".



This book, Managing as designing, is based on a series of conference papers. It explores the attitude of design thinking, as a new focus for analysis and decision making for managers. The premise of this book is that managers are designers as well as decision makers and that although the two are inextricably linked in management action, we have for too long emphasised the decision face of management over the design face. We can rethink managing as designing. You can order this book at [Bol.com](http://Bol.com). [Here](#) you can download the first chapter, for free.



# 4. RETHINKING EDUCATION

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**W**hat we learn at school is not preparing us for today's reality. We need different skills compared to what is being taught. We need to unscrew the education system. Rethinking education.

The need for transformation is greater now than ever before. No matter where we look, we see problems that only can be solved by acting different.

Education is where it all starts: what we learn at school is what we apply in businesses and society. Changing the way we educate is key to changing the system.

Our current ways in higher education just aren't enough; especially when we're dealing with rapidly changing and complex situations. What is being taught is too limited, too narrow. We focus only on a small part and we miss important other aspects. The current system makes that we aren't using the full potential of who we are. Or could be. Time to unscrew the system: not only *how* we learn, but also *what* we learn.

## **RETHINKING *HOW* WE LEARN**

By rethinking the system of *how* we learn, we mean moving beyond formal, mass schooling, pre-packaged structure, one sided (boring) broadcasting lessons. Using more effective learning styles. Informal and social learning, with play, fun and joy. Using visualisation (go beyond words), discussing...we can go on...many things...anything to stop giving boring lectures.

## **RETHINKING *WHAT* WE LEARN**

By rethinking the system of *what* we learn, we mean - for example - going beyond rational and logical thinking, learn creative thinking.

And learning (how to) fail, figuring things out, make mistakes - to grow and really learn.

And, we believe real learning goes beyond thinking - it requires doing.

**It's not enough to know. You can see things, hear and know things. But you have to do it, to become it.**

We barely learn how to act. This is about being operational: the ability to get things done. This is hardly taught at school, while it is almost as important as reading, writing and all other stuff we learn. And there is more, a lot more to learn the skills we need for today's world.

But, if we go back to the basics - that what we learn at school is not preparing us for today's reality - we believe an important thing is: We learn WHAT to think, not HOW to think. This is not about knowledge. Knowledge is not enough to deal with the rapidly changing and complex situations of our society. It's about learning *how* to think.

Education is where it all starts: what we learn at school is what we apply in businesses and society. Changing the way we educate is key to changing the system.

Rethinking education. Rethinking how we learn and what we learn. Or, better said: *re-doing* education. Because thinking about it is not enough.

## **FOR THE CURIOUS**

\* Check out this [Flipboard Magazine, all about rethinking education.](#)

Watch this three TED Talks of Sir Ken Robinson for you (we <3 him)

\* [Bring on the learning revolution](#)

\* [Schools kill creativity](#)

\* [How to escape education's death valley](#)

\* Watch this RSA Animation: [Changing Education Paradigms](#)

# 5. THE VALUE OF FUN, PLAY AND HAPPINESS

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In most organisations, work is done in a formal, serious way. With a little attention for moods and atmosphere. Do you know the value of fun, joy, play and happiness at work? These factors could be your money makers.

## THE SYSTEM

Work is done in a formal, serious way. Formal language usually prevails and efficiency is leading. Why?

One reason is: it's in our habits and routines. In 'traditional' organisations; we just don't do it "that way". There is a separation between work and private lives. Business is formal.

Another reason is that there is a strong belief that fun, play and joy are efficiency killers. And therefore, it costs money.

## THE SURVIVAL OF THE HAPPIEST

While happiness is of great value for people, it also has **economic value** and it can play an important **role in (changing) behaviour**.

There is a direct link between moods and the behaviour and actions of people. Pleasure, fun and happiness do play an important role in the way people act. Everyone is always in a situation with a certain state of mind, certain feelings and certain emotions. These moods are not *consequences* of our actions, they are *the medium through which the actions occur*.

The world is changing and scientific evidence is proving that happy, engaged employees are good for business because they perform better, produce better results, are more creative and are



willing to go the extra mile. And happiness leads to engagement. There is lots of scientific proof on the value of happiness. Research shows there is a direct link between happiness and pleasure, and business results. For example, 'happiness' in work is leading to an increase in turnover of 37%, productivity by 31% and accuracy in performing tasks with 19%. Another study indicates that it leads to 10-25% higher performance at work. So, fun, joy and happiness can also be seen as money makers. As some people call it: "The survival of the Happiest '.

If you want to read more about happiness in organisations, [there's a whole issue of Harvard Business Review on this subject.](#)

There are also many (management) books and initiatives relating to the fun factor. 'The Fun Theory' (an initiative of Volkswagen) is a nice example: it shows several initiatives where fun is used to change behaviour. "[Fun is the easiest way to change people's behavior for the better](#) .

## **BOOSTING INNOVATION**

In relation to happiness and fun, play can be important, also for innovation. Not only because people love it, but it is a very important way **to make new knowledge**. The sensing, seeking, non-linear nature of playing and gaming is important. Many great discoveries arose playfully, by chance. Also in the (serious) gaming industry we see the combination of gaming and fun. **Play to learn.**

Apart from trying to prove the value of fun for people, you can also ask yourself how far we get if we do not enjoy what we do.

John Paul Lederarch turns the whole thing around. He says:

**"There is no scientific evidence that seriousness leads to greater growth, maturity, or insight into the human condition than playfulness."**

And why would you separate personal life from work? We're all human. Why not connecting personal and business life? [Bring your soul to work](#)

## SO, WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Professionalism, the use of formal language and the focus on efficiency in organisations can affect 'the fun factor'. And pleasure and happiness is not only of great value for people, it even has economic value, can play an important role in (changing) behaviour and boost innovation.

So, why not give it a try? Adding informality, besides the serious and formal way of acting and the focus on efficiency. Fun, joy, play and happiness at work could be your money makers.

PS. Plan B has the role of "The Set Designer" for this: monitors a positive and optimistic vibe and knows the value of fun, playing and humour.

## FOR THE CURIOUS

- \* Check out our [Flipboard magazine about the Value of fun, play and happiness.](#)
- \* Watch this TED talk by Stuart Brown. [Play is more than just fun. Why play is vital.](#)
  
- \* To read: [The happiness dividend](#)
- \* To read: [Thank God, it's Monday](#)



## TO READ

- \* Check out our [Flipboard magazine on Innovation](#)
- \* Check out our [Flipboard magazine with articles, tips and tricks about Creative Thinking in Business](#)

## TOOLS & VIDEOS

- \* **Videos.** Check out our [Flipboard magazine with lots of videos about creativity](#)
- \* **Tools.** Check out our [Flipboard magazine with tools for creativity](#)

# MORE & CONTACT

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**M**ore free ebooks can be found on [this page](#).

Including:

- \* Plan B for Communication
- \* Plan B for Projects
- \* Plan B Introduction

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