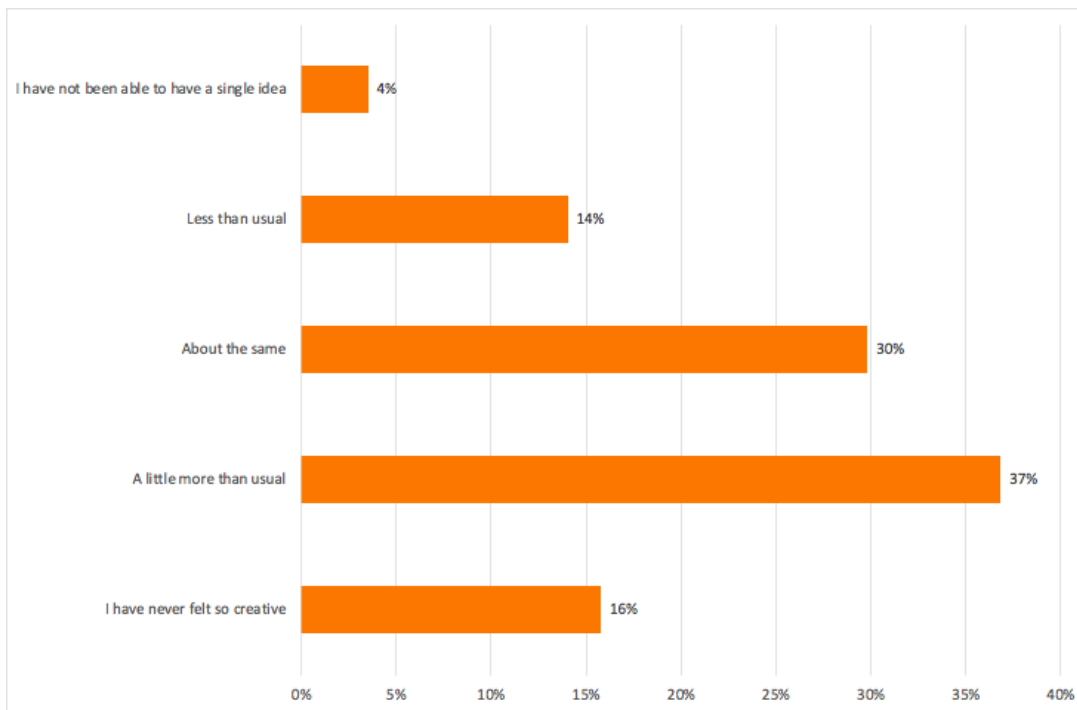


Creativity at Home

Intro

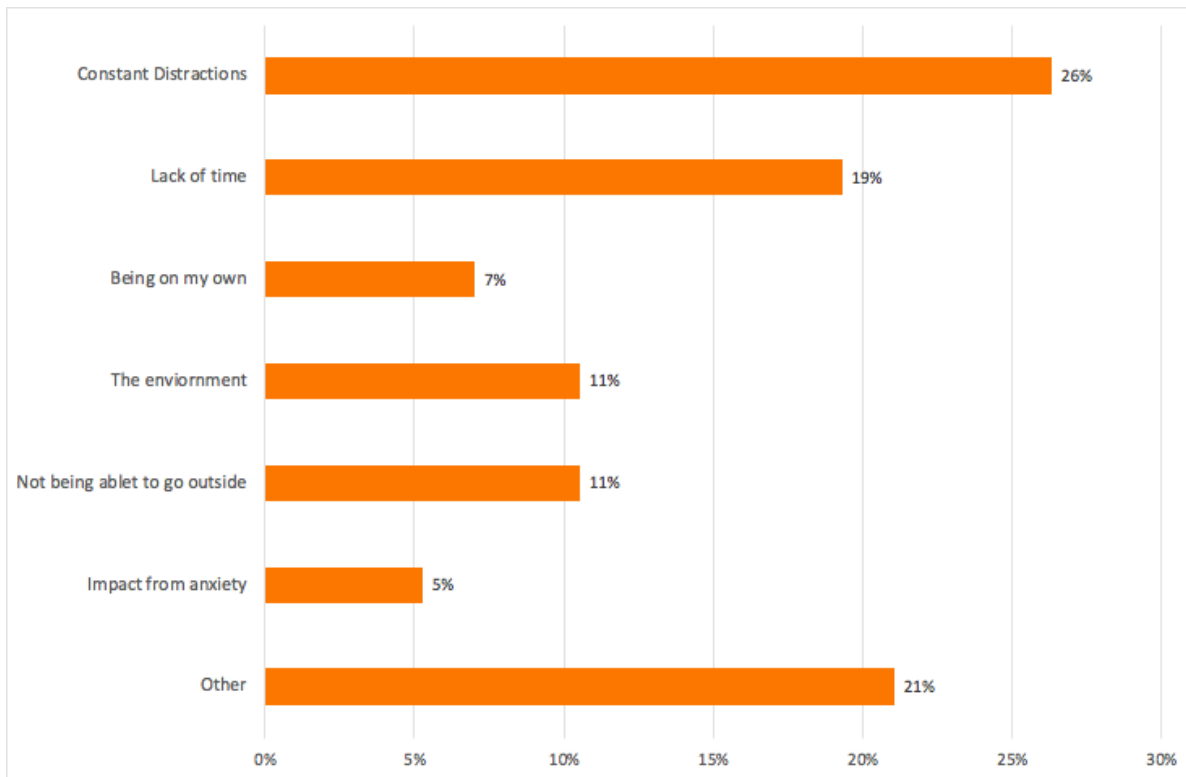
During times of uncertainty, the most valuable asset we have is our ability to be creative. It's what fuels innovation and ultimately it will be those who are able to adapt, coming up with new ideas of how to operate in these challenging times, that will come out stronger. In the words of TS Elliot "Anxiety is the handmaiden of creativity." And never has creativity been more valuable (even before the crisis it was considered the most valuable soft skill according to LinkedIn).



Survey Data: How creative have you been feeling since lockdown?

And it seems that many of you are taking these words to heed with 50% of those we surveyed¹ saying you have been more creative than usual. However, some are still struggling to be creative – we are either too busy, constantly being distracted by our children who we have had to home school or simply struggling with anxiety.

¹ A survey was completed by over 50 Creative leaders in May 2020



Survey Results: What have been the biggest barrier to creativity during lockdown

So we thought it would be worth sharing some of the hacks, items and tools that we have collected over the last five years (including from the survey) to help you unleash your creativity at home. We have grouped them into 5 key areas – inspiration, creativity tools, maker, play, creative headspace and creative superpowers – and our hope is that they will inspire you to rediscover a childlike sense of curiosity and help you unlock those ideas that will ultimately help solve some of the big issues you will be facing right now as well as opening up new opportunities through new ideas.

INSPIRATION

‘Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while.’ – Steve Jobs

Inspiration is food for our creativity. A richer and more diverse diet for our brains will lead to wider and more wonderful creative thinking. Mark Earls (founder of The HERD) says “We often imagine that having the idea is the important bit. Wrong - much of the time, ideas are remakes of something that already exists, just re-contextualised, reworked, reimagined, re-whatever.” Inspiration is therefore a way of increasing your chances of hitting the idea combo jackpot.

Inspiration can come from many different places. Here are some ideas to get you inspired:

Learn, unlearning and relearn by reading

Below you will find some suggested reads although you can also check out the full recommended reading list [HERE](#). Let us know if we have missed any out.

Visit the world’s biggest art galleries from the comfort of your home

Here are some examples of how you can access some of the most beautiful art galleries in the world:

- The doors to the Sistine Chapel may be closed but you can experience the [virtual tour](#) and see probably the most famous art in the world up close. It really is mind-blowing whether on screen or face to face.
- [The Courtauld Institute](#) has put their collections online.
- Hauser and Wirth the Modern Art officiandos have shared online their wonderful collaboration with [Jenny Holzer for Earth day](#)
- The Royal Academy have very kindly posted a [39m virtual tour](#) of the Picasso and Paper exhibition
- And if you like a bit of context Tate Modern has created a film of their [Andy Warhol exhibition](#) which is both beautiful and fascinating

Be inspired by nature

Visit the world and nature from the comfort of your home

- Explore some of the world’s [most beautiful gardens](#)

- Visit some of the world's [most beautiful beaches](#)
- Check into Times Square via [Earthcam](#)
- Explore [Machu Picchu](#), [Chichen Itza](#) or [The Taj Mahal](#)

Listen to some of the most inspiring podcasts

Here are just some of the podcasts we love and you told us inspired you:

- Bruce Daisley's [Eat Sleep Work Repeat](#) which is all about making work better
- Our [Best Piece of Advice series](#) on Soho Radio, collecting the best piece of advice ever given to a diverse set of creatives
- [Creative Boom](#) – fun and honest conversations with creative people
- [Creative Rebels](#) – Inspiring interviews with creative people who have rebelled against the 9-5 (and advice on how you can too)
- [Future Thinkers](#) - A podcast about evolving technology, society and consciousness
- [Girl Boss](#) - honest conversations with trailblazing women. These women go deep on what it takes to build a successful career or grow a business with staying power—while living life on their own terms
- [How to fail with Elizabeth Day](#) celebrates the things that have not gone right
- Emma Gannon's Ctrl Alt Delete which as a gateway to new ideas – check out our Creative Superpowers series [HERE](#)
- [Off Menu](#) – Comedians Ed Gamble and James Acaster invite special guests into the magical restaurant to each choose their favourite starter, main course, side dish, dessert drink. “The silliness and joy of it is the perfect combination of comforting and mind expanding” – Daisy Buchanan
- [Masters of Scale](#) – Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn show how companies grow from zero to a gazillion testing his theories with legendary leaders
- [RadioLab](#) – investigating a strange world

Find yourself a creative buddy

“Alone we can do so little: together we can do so much” - Helen Keller

There is a reason that we are all missing the ability to just spend time with our peers and colleagues. Just having someone else to bounce ideas off is fundamental to coming up with new solutions. Which is why we are a huge fan of the idea of finding a creative buddy. Not only as someone who you can bounce ideas off of, but also someone who will hold you accountable and ask you questions like ‘How have you been creative this week?’

Seeing the world through the eyes of children

Childhood has always been associated with creativity. Look at the world through the eyes of a child and rediscovering our innate sense of curiosity is a sure way to find inspiration. Talking with kids, watching media geared towards children and browsing through children's books titles are all ways to get in touch with your inner child.

And here are some of the things that have inspired you during the Lockdown:

- [The Great Realisation](#) - The fairytale-esque poem by Tomos Roberts (aka Probably Tomfoolery) details the grim realities of pre-Covid life, such as pollution and over-consumption, before imagining a brighter future once the pandemic is over
- The [Keyboard CEO lectures](#) by The Do Lectures
- Being part of a community locally and virtually and sharing our experiences
- Test Pressings [Stay Home and Chill Lists](#)
- [Grim Reaper on the Beach](#)
- [Keith Yamashita](#)
- [The Overstory book](#)
- My children, nature and interior design and gardening instagrammers
- The quiet. The lack of stimuli and a million meetings have — like meditation silenced the clutter and given me ideas
- Having head space. No engagements. Nothing to plan; cleared up room.
- Extra time to think
- The rise of humanness: (i.e. the vulnerability of people acknowledging our limits and faults)
- The drastic shift in the perceptions of time to the entire world
- BLM and the momentum that has engulfed the world to begin the process of systematic change.
- Creating new & speculative narratives focused on a future pluralist society where everyone belongs

And here are some of the things that have always inspired you:

- [It's Nice that](#)

- [Creative Mornings](#)
- [Brain Pickings](#)
- [Design Inspiration](#)
- [Colossal](#)
- [Black Artists & Designers Guild](#)
- Social Media (Instagram & Pinterest mainly)
- Recipe Sites

Books to inspire your creativity

Creative Superpowers: Equip yourself for the Age of Creativity

"A must – a rare gem that sparks ideas long after you have finished the final chapter. A book we all need." Helen Calcraft (Founding Partner, Lucky Generals)

The Idea Agent: The Handbook on Creative Processes (Jonas Michanek)

"A handbook introduced to me during my time at Hyper Island and a fantastic resource packed full of step-by-step ideation techniques."

James Kirk (Senior Product Designer, Rocket Lawyer)

What Are You Looking At?: 150 Years of Modern Art in the Blink of an Eye (Will Gomez)

"Gompertz manages to brilliantly connect pop culture with fine art."

Flo Heiss (Co-founder, ZOOPERHEISS)

The Brand Flip: Why customers now run companies and how to profit from it (Marty Neumeier)

"In the world of brands, this is your competitive advantage."

Simon Gill (Chief Experience Officer at Isobar)

One Plus One Equals Three: A Masterclass in Creative Thinking (Dave Trott)

One Plus One Equals Three goes straight to the heart of the creative impulse. Combining Dave Trott's distinctive, almost Zen-like storytelling, humour and practical advice, its collection of provocative anecdotes and thought experiments are designed to light a fire under your own creative ambitions.

How To Fly A Horse: The Secret History of Creation, Invention, and Discovery (Kevin Ashton)

U T O P I A

Author Kevin Ashton is the man that coined the term "the Internet of Things". How To Fly A Horse is a wonderful mix of psychology, sociology and anecdotes of personal struggles and triumphs made by creators throughout history.

CREATIVE TOOLS

“Give ordinary people the right tools, and they will design and build the most extraordinary things.” – Neil Gershenfeld, Director of MIT's Center for Bits and Atoms

Creativity tools can come in many different forms. From cards that help you break through a mental block, to stationary that brings ideas to life. All are designed to help facilitate the creative process and ultimately lead to better, more effective results.

Here are some of our favourites:

Brian Eno Oblique Strategy cards - In 1975, Peter Schmidt and Brian Eno created the original pack of Oblique Strategies cards, through thinking about approaches to their own work as artist and musician. Each card contains a phrase or cryptic remark which can be used to break a deadlock or dilemma situation.

School of Life Conversation cards

In this set of beautiful cards, you'll find laid out a hundred of the very best questions around, carefully designed to get a group of people into exceptionally entertaining and meaningful conversations.

Copy Copy Copy VIP Cards - Based on several years' research and practice by behavioral expert Mark Earls, this set of cards will help you do better behaviour change strategy faster. The cards gather more than 50 different behaviour change strategies into 1 pack of starting points, each strategy brought to life with a number of real-world examples.

Artefact Cards (for office)

Artefact Cards are designed for a perfect, subtle balance of quality and usability. People are more inclined to craft better ideas on Artefact Cards, because the cards feel that they should have something great on them. Once you have ideas on the cards, you can keep moving, shuffling, stacking, dealing and matching them. You can continually create new context and combinations for your different ideas and elements.

Pomodoro Timer

U T O P I A

The Pomodoro Technique is a time management philosophy that aims to provide the people with maximum focus and creative freshness, thereby allowing them to complete projects faster with less mental fatigue. The process is simple. For every project throughout the day, you budget your time into short increments and take breaks periodically. You work for 25 minutes, then take a break for five minutes. Each 25-minute work period is called a “pomodoro”, named after the Italian word for tomato.

The technique's inventor Francesco Cirillo used a kitchen timer shaped like a tomato as his personal timer, and thus the method's name. After four “pomodoros” have passed, (100 minutes of work time with 15 minutes of break time) you then take a 15-20 minute break. Every time you finish a pomodoro, you mark your progress with an “X”, and note the number of times you had the impulse to procrastinate or switch gears to work on another task for each 25-minute chunk of time.

You can also simply download the [Bear Focus Timer App](#) which uses the Pomodoro technique to help you focus and can also deliver white noise to help you focus more.

Pen and Paper

“Putting Pen to Paper Lights More Fires than Matches ever will”

Don't underestimate the power of the pen and paper (although some people prefer a pencil to a pen). [Here are 10 reasons why.](#)

Time Pressures

"I don't need time, what I need is a deadline" Duke Ellington, Jazz Musician

Open deadlines are the perfect setting for procrastination. Sometimes the pressure of time constraints can create a sense of momentum in a project. Even allocating set periods of time for sprints of focussed creativity can really boost productivity

This alarm cube was recently floating around LinkedIn. It's a very quick way of setting focused time blocks - you just turn the cube and it sets the timer to correspond with the minutes on the side.

https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Clock-Timer-Alarm-Cube-Digital-5-15-30-60-Minutes-Time-Management-For-Home-/163176134866?_trksid=p2349624.m46890.l49292.

Lateral Thinking Exercises

These kinds of exercises help you think around problems by drawing on the associations and connotations surrounding them.

Some examples of lateral thinking exercises are:

- Alternative objects game
- Similes exercise
- The Metaphor game
- Random generation game
- Good idea bad idea
- Reverse problem Affinity mapping
- Artifact cards

Even something as simple as looking in a thesaurus can trigger lateral thinking and development of creative solutions.

“How Might We” Questions

This tool from Hyper Island helps reframe insights as opportunities for design.

<https://toolbox.hyperisland.com/how-might-we-questions>

Creative Exchange

Some people have created employee networks where members exchange things that they have found inspiring.

PLAY

“Play is our brain's favourite way of learning.” – Diane Ackerman, Author, Poet, Naturalist

Play is arguably one of the most important traits within creativity and often undervalued. It allows us to see the world through the eyes of a child while developing and embracing abilities such as adaptability, curiosity, empathy and fearlessness. It has been scientifically proven that play evokes a state where it's ok to fail and the result is the ability to freely explore the unknown. Play removes limits that otherwise constrain us to what we currently know to be possible. It's by removing those constraints and opening ourselves to diversity (through play) that new creative insights become much easier to spot.

Teenage Engineering Pocket Op

The size of a calculator, this beautifully designed mini synth will have pushing its buttons and twisting its knobs for hours once you pick it up. Pocket Operators are small and ultra portable, with studio quality sound and the flexibility to make music on the go. Making electronic music has never been this much fun.

Nintendo Donkey Kong (vintage 80s)

One of the all time classic video games. A perfect way to take your mind off the creative problems you are trying to solve and let the subconscious mull it over for a while.

Addictaball Maze

This fiendishly addictive 3D maze puzzle contains 138 numbered stages of spirals, drops, swinging arms, flips and slides. As you try to guide the ball through each stage, the Addictaball will challenge your dexterity, hand-eye coordination and patience

Backgammon

One of the oldest board games known and a fantastic workout for your strategic mind. A game that can be played with minimum levels of noise so not to distract others

Connect Four

Another 2 player classic that focuses on strategic thinking and problem solving, allowing your subconscious mind to focus on the creative problems you are working on

U T O P I A

LEGO

Never under-estimate the power of Lego – there are more than 915m ways to combine 6 eight-stud Lego bricks which gives you an unlimited amount of creative freedom and playing with Lego has been proven to fire up your creative cells. Time to release your inner child.

Artistic Expression

CREATIVE HEADSPACE

“Rule your mind or it will rule you.” – Budda

Making time for creative headspace in our day not only helps solve problems, it can also prevent some. It helps you experience and react better to situations and it creates focus, calm and clarity. It's easy to feel happy when the mind is calm and clear. Far more valuable is the ability to feel happy in the midst of noise and confusion. This is what it means to have creative headspace.

Turn off your phone

The benefits of taking a digital detox (even for short periods of times) have been well documented. Increased mindfulness, lowered anxiety, better appreciation of one's environment and becoming more people-oriented are just a few.

Music

As we have already noted, music is a huge source of inspiration. However it can also be a good way to open up the mind. Many creatives listen to completely different music when they are getting into a creative space

Also listening to the same music time and time again can help you .

Artificial bonsai trees

Having plants (even artificial ones) in your workplace increases memory retention and concentration. The calming influence of natural elements creates positivity and helps people concentrate on the task at hand. if the space allows you to have real plants then even better but best check people's allergies first. Alternatively people in the UK should check out [Patch Plants](#), which is revolutionising the way we buy plants for our home.

Dress to impress

Research shows that how you dress can impact how you think. And while it may be tempted to dress in what is most comfortable at home, research has shown that dressing more formally increases abstract thinking and a broader sense of perspective. Saying that it could be simple as wearing your creative socks or your sparkly Converse to get you into your creative headspace.

U T O
P I A

Sleep

When we're at home 24/7 sleep can quickly become something that Netflix or Amazon Prime eats into. Don't let this happen as studies show that those people who have 8-9 hours sleep are more productive and creative than those who have less. Sleep is a chance for your brain to process everything you have experienced during the day so, yes you got it, creative ideas can percolate.

Here are some of the ways you told us you got your creative headspace:

- Go to sleep
- Try to escape other people for 2 minutes
- Walk away from the laptop, grab a pen and paper and lay on the bed, possibly even have a short 20 min nap and my head is
- Music...classical. Chopin! Or The sounds of rain falling
- Read on the balcony
- Yoga
- Run, ride and read trashy novels
- Play video games
- Hang out in the trees or look at them through the window for 10 mins!
- I try to make a clearer cut off time between work and personal time now.
- Play guitar
- Meditate. hit golf balls. peloton. Not at the same time.

CREATIVE SUPERPOWERS

We believe we are on the verge of an Age of Creativity that will require a new set of superheroes to build better businesses and cultures across all industries. An age when the most important skill in business will be creativity. And in this age, there will be four key creative superpowers:

- **Maker** – The Maker mindset is one of prototyping, tinkering and engineering. It's all about pulling your sleeves up and getting your hands dirty, transforming the ideas in your head into tangible creations
- **Hacker** – A hacker is someone who always assumes something is broken and wants to fix it. Hackers understand the need to break problems down and make lots and lots of small changes to make things better
- **Teacher** – A teacher recognises that they own ability to learn, unlearn and relearn is vital to their future survival
- **Thief** – A thief appreciates how the full spectrum of stealing, copying and borrowing can provide the fast-track to creating new ideas

We often use each of these superpowers to help clients solve problems and open up new opportunities and overleaf we have included a few to give you the tools to unleash your own creativity. You can find more workshops in [Creative Superpowers: Equip Yourself for the Age of Creativity](#).

Breaking a problem down (Hacking)

This exercise is to get you in the habit of breaking bigger problems down into smaller bits. As Gareth Kay, founding partner of Zeus Jones, said in our last book, 'Hacks, by definition, are more effective. They take big complicated problems that can be more easily solved, whatever the solution takes. As a result, they remove the gap between the commercial imperative and the creative solution.'

All you need is pen, paper and Post-it notes.

Step 1

Take a big problem (e.g. gender equality in the workplace).

U T O P I A

Step 2

Break the problem down into smaller parts.

E.g. for gender equality in the workplace it might be:

- Unconscious bias.
- Gender pay gap.
- Parental leave.
- Men's resistance to change.

Step 3

Take each of these smaller parts and break them down one step further.

E.g. for parental leave it might be:

- Gap between maternity leave and paternity leave.
- Cost of childcare.
- Lack of flexible working hours.
- Reluctance for men to take shared parental leave (due to cultural issues).
- The gender pay gap.

Step 4

Keep on doing this until you can't get any further (some may stop sooner than others).

Step 5

For each end point, think of one thing you can do to solve that problem. How might you change your behaviour as a business or as an individual? Write these down as a list.

Step 6

Commit to make ten changes over a three-month period. Write them down and at the end of each month monitor your progress and the impact it has had on the problem.

U T O P I A

Repeat process as required.

Breaking a problem down (Teacher)

This exercise is intended to give you a burst of energy when you most need it. All you need is a chair, some quiet space and a pen and paper. If you have never done a visualisation exercise before you might find it difficult at first; if so, we suggest you set yourself a target of doing it twice a week for a month and you will find it will become far easier.

(Please read this very s-l-o-w-l-y first)

Step 1 (five minutes)

Find a comfy chair in a quiet space. Now, close your eyes. Think of a time when you were incredibly creative. You'd just completed a project, piece of art, baked a cake ... whatever it is, make sure you felt massively proud of it.

Visualise it vividly, smell the smells, hear the sounds, breathe deeply. Touch whatever it was. Hold it up to the sky. Keep visualising it and remembering how you felt. Go deep. Hold that feeling for thirty seconds and then open your eyes.

Step 2 (five minutes)

Now, write down how you feel, what you heard, smelled, touched. Once you have finished writing it down, read what you have written. You should now have a warm glow, a vivid recollection of how powerful you are when you're firing on all cylinders, when you're in the flow. Notice how nothing is a challenge and you feel like you can achieve anything – welcome to your Boom! When you are in your Boom! you are far more receptive to stimulus and creating ideas and you should be ready to unleash your creative superpowers.

UTOPIA

What would Google do? (thief)

This exercise is intended simply to make you think differently about a business problem by imagining what someone else would do when faced with that same problem. Again, all you need is time, an open mind and pen and paper.

Simply take your business problem and ask yourself the following questions

- What would Google do?
- How would Steve Jobs have tackled it?
- What would David Bowie do?
- What would Michelle Obama do?
- What would Lady Gaga do?
- What would Elon Musk do?
- What would Donald Trump do?
- What would it look like broken down as a set of pieces on the front page of an IKEA instruction manual? What piece is broken?
- How would you draw the problem? Actually draw it. What would it look like if Damian Hirst was drawing it, or Banksy was drawing it?
- What would the betting or the porn industries do (perhaps two of the most innovative industries in the world, driven by the restrictions placed on them)?
- What would the banking or insurance industries do?



SUMMARY

We do hope you found this useful. If so, we would love to hear from you. Either tweet us at @weareutopians (using hashtag #creativityathome) or contact me (details below). We have also specifically developed a workshop to unleash your teams creative thinking at home so do get in touch if interested:

Daniele Fiandaca, co-founder (Utopia)

+44 7976 826 194

daniele@weareutopia.co

THANKS

A massive thanks to everyone who contributed to this report. A particular mention to the following:

James Kirk

Everyone who completed the survey

The Creative Socials

The Do Lectures Alumni

Laura Jordan Bambach

Mark Earls

Scott Morrison

ABOUT UTOPIA

Utopia is a culture-change business.

In a business landscape where creative thinking is the primary driver of growth, our changemakers help organisations build more purposeful, more inclusive and more entrepreneurial cultures, fit for this age of creativity.

We do this by disrupting, inspiring and rewiring - from the intern to the CEO, through workshops and hacks - to create happier, inclusive, more productive workforces that deliver competitive advantage. And we've done it for businesses across the board, including Coca-Cola European Partners, D&AD, Google, Schneider Electric, Spotify and Universal Music.

To find out more, [click here.](#)