

A radio interview about creativity in business.**Optional exercise - Listen and decide whether these sentences are true or false.** (Answers at end)

1. Reading a good book can animate your creativity.
 2. Art and Business are working alone on the project.
 3. When business men were asked to name a book which had influenced them, less than half chose a non fiction book.
 4. Creative processes occur in the right side of the brain.
 5. When we analyse the relationship between characters in a book, we are training ourselves to understand emotional matters.
 6. Marks & Spencer organises separate reading groups for managers and employees.
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Presenter: Art & Business is an organisation that develops creative partnerships between business and the arts. Peter Jones is going to talk about the company's ideas and tell us about some of their success stories. Peter, maybe you could begin by telling our listeners why Art & Business was created?

Peter Jones: Well, in the twenty first century productivity is no longer a matter of machines. The success of a company depends on its people and on the creativity of its people. It makes sense that the way to increase productivity is to stimulate creativity.

Presenter: And what better way to stimulate creativity than through reading books.

Peter Jones: Exactly. Every reader knows that a good book can stimulate the imagination and the intellect, get you thinking along lines you might not have thought of before, open up new worlds.

Presenter: So, have you had any help in setting up the project?

Peter Jones: Yes. The London Libraries Agency and an organisation called The Reading Partnership work with us on this project. We are trying to use the power of the written word to motivate staff in the workplace. In a recent survey seven hundred business leaders were asked which book had inspired them and had a positive influence on their career. They were able to choose any kind of book, any kind at all. Only about 40% chose a business book. Most people chose a work of fiction; a novel, a play or even poetry.

Presenter: How can reading help somebody to become a more creative worker?

Peter Jones: Successful managers need to be well-rounded people. They need active imaginations. When they interpret fictional scenarios, they are using their creativity. Readers combine imaginative skills with critical and analytical skills.

Presenter: Are we talking about the right and left sides of the brain?

Peter Jones: Yes. Our logical left side of the brain interprets the language of a book. The creative right side looks at the forms of expression. The left side analyses the plot while the right side is more interested in the relationships between characters – the emotional aspects.

Presenter: How does this transfer to the world of Business?

Peter Jones: Creative ideas make businesses more competitive. Shared reading experiences improve communication and morale at work.

Presenter: Can you give listeners some examples of how this scheme has been brought successfully into the workplace?

Peter Jones: Employees at WH Smith have stuck poems and quotations above their desks for inspiration.

Presenter: Well, WH Smith deals in books. What about other examples?

Peter Jones: The telecommunications company Orange set up a project called "Talk Books at Work". They discovered that encouraging employees to read helped them to develop their linguistic and interpersonal skills. Marks and Spencer has set up reading groups at work. The groups cut across the usual hierarchies and working relationships have improved greatly.

Answers: 1T 2F 3F 4T 5T 6F