

ABOUT THE EVENT

A five day workshop on “**Creative Strategic Thinking for Social Change**” was organized by the Department of Mass communication and Journalism at Tezpur University from the 9th to the 13th of October, 2018. The workshop was primarily aimed at the students of media studies and it focused on how creative thinking can help bring about social change in today’s world. It helped the students to construct regular and easy methods of creative thinking and develop unique ways of applying that creativity. It was a way in which youngsters could think beyond the unseen mental boundaries and come up with something innovative and one of a kind.

In today’s world where New Media has its roots going deeper than ever, the pressure to create something new and original is augmenting. The only way this process will get easier in future is by enhancing our abilities to think creatively. Hence, creativity plays an important role in generating ideas, one of its kind, and it is these little ideas that later make a big difference. Idea generation is considered to be one of the most important steps in various fields of mass media like advertising, film making, story or feature writing, etc.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

- To understand creativity in communication.
- To identify roadblocks to creative thinking.
- To identify roadblocks to social change and development.
- To understand and apply the six thinking hats required to generate an idea.
- To enhance the presentation skills of the participating students.
- To learn the key features of Campaign Planning.

PARTICIPANTS OF THE WORKSHOP

- 1st Semester students of Mass Communication and Development.
- 3rd Semester students of Communication for Development.

PROFILE OF THE INVITED SPEAKER

Mr. Sam Rufus



An enticing speaker Mr. Sam Rufus is the CEO of his own learning set up, **EPIC – Enriching People In Creativity**, situated at Delhi. EPIC is engaged in strategizing, designing and conducting customized training programs for the cultivation of creative thinking as a thrilling habit. The programs are aimed at corporates who believe that “you can’t do things differently unless you think differently”. Prior to this, Mr. Sam Rufus served as a Creative Director with many multinational Ad agencies as well.

After graduating in Commerce from St. Xavier’s College, Kolkata Mr. Sam Rufus started working in Finance but the predictable and mundane nature of the job left him unsatisfied and he decided to take a plunge into advertising. This was not easy as majority of the advertising agencies considered him incompetent due to Finance being his expertise. However, his continued persistence and hard work eventually landed him in an Ad Agency and since then, he never looked back. He is responsible for the **re-positioning of Nestle's Milkmaid** in 1982-83 while serving Clarion Advertising and also for coining the famous tagline “**2 – minute noodles**” for Maggi.

Today he is also working as an Adjunct Professor in International Management Institute (IMI), New Delhi and is actively engaged as a Visiting Faculty in Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (IIMC), Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) and Apeejay Institute of Mass Communications (AIMC), amongst others.

DETAILS OF THE FIVE DAY EVENT

DAY 1

Session 1

The seminar began with **Dr. Anjuman Borah**, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University, introducing the guest speaker Mr. Sam Rufus and talking about how his previous visits have been extremely valuable for the students of the department.

She also explained the theme of the workshop and how it will benefit the young minds of the media fraternity. She emphasized on how the workshop will be a learning experience for not only those who are interested in the field of advertising but also anybody who has the desire to create something new and work for the betterment of the society.

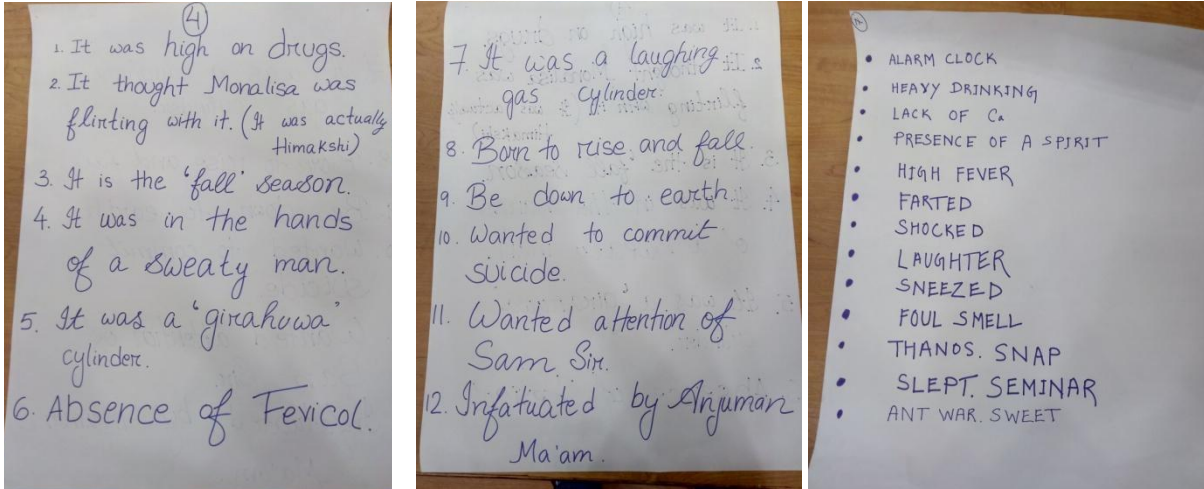
She hoped that at the end of the five day workshop the participating students would have learned something invaluable, which will always serve as flag posts if and when a student is faced with a challenge of constructing something unique.

Mr. Sam Rufus started with a brief introduction of himself where he called himself a “**learner**”, saying he is always learning and will continue to do so. He then talked about how information is different from communication. He said, “Information is giving out while communication is getting through.” Communication is a process that involves stimulation of meaning and a successful communication is one that makes the head feel “**I get it**”, the gut feel “**I love it**” and the heart feel “**I value it**”. He then moved on to how communication plays a vital role in marketing and how creative communication can help build perceptions in the minds of the public. He said, “**Creativity in communication is opening the third eye and third ear.**”

He ended the session with a creative exercise in **Divergent Thinking** where he asked the students to think of a variety of reasons as to why the black cylinder fell. He fondly calls it the “**Black Cylinder**” experiment. It is a popular element of most of his workshops.

Session 2

The post lunch session began with the revelation of the many ideas thought out by the students in response to the Black Cylinder experiment. Participants were sorted into groups of seven to eight and each group came up with five to twenty different ideas which impressed Mr. Samuel Rufus.



Posters prepared in response to the Black Cylinder

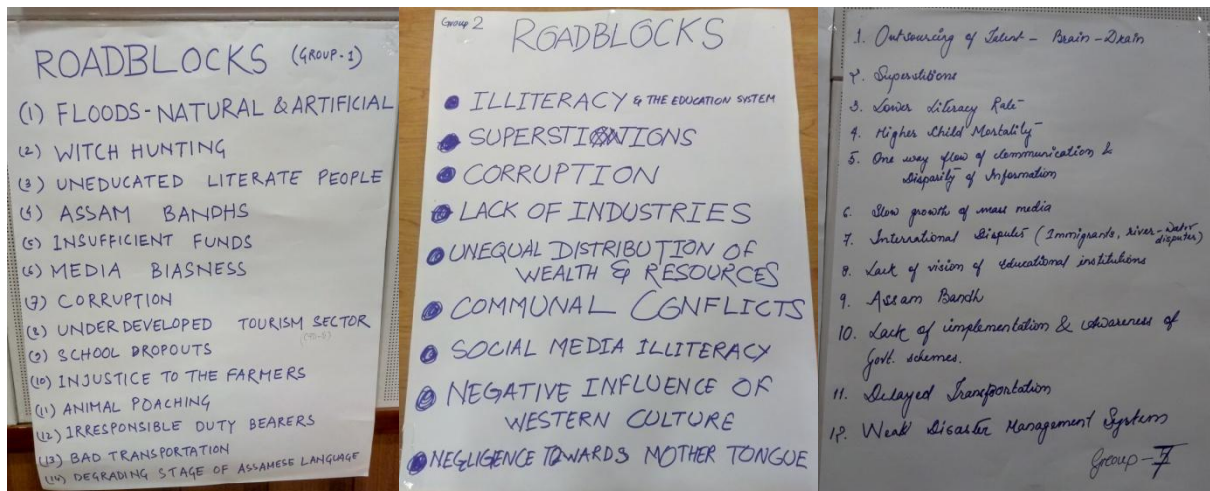
He then explained as to why this experiment was a necessary step in order to think creatively. While coming up with an idea one needs to be as wild and funny as possible because some of the best ideas come up as jokes. There should be no preconceived notions in our way of thinking as most of the times it is our own restrictions that form the barriers to free thinking. He goes on to mention that our education system has killed our creativity by making us think and work in only certain ways that are considered best. This results in students not even trying to explore other ways of thinking. So in order to make creative thinking a thrilling habit one has to keep in mind a few key points.

- We should never limit ourselves to self-imposed boundaries.
- We should never conform to a certain idea.
- There should be no fear of looking like a fool.
- We should not evaluate too quickly.

Session 3

In this session he gave a brief idea about the **Circle of Concern** and the **Circle of Influence**. Circle of Concern includes the wide range of concerns we may have about a certain topic whereas Circle of Influence includes those concerns that we can do something about. They are concerns that we have some control over.

In order to make this easily understandable he gave a final exercise for the day where the same groups were asked to find out the roadblocks that are limiting the growth of the state of Assam. Later, each group made a presentation on the various factors they thought were responsible for the slow growth of the state. These formed the Circle of Concern.



Posters highlighting the roadblocks to social development in Assam

He concluded the final day by speaking about the mindset of high achievers. He said that in order to achieve one must be proactive rather than responsive. In that way we will be creating or controlling a situation rather than simply reacting to it which already keeps us one step ahead of others.

DAY 2

Session 1

Day 2 began with a review of learning of Day 1 followed by an insight into **tools for creative thinking**. In this, Mr. Sam Rufus encouraged the students with motivating quotes like “Be the change you wish to see”, “Look at differences as opportunities” and “When you reach for the stars you may not touch them but you will definitely not come up with dust”. These impactful words set the rhythm for the entire day. After this, he talked about the difference between a consumer and a customer, explained what briefing is all about and the six important questions we should ask ourselves in order to think in 360 degrees.

They are:

- Where are we?
- Why are we where we are?
- Where do we want to be?
- Why do we want to be where we want to be?
- How shall we get there?
- How soon do we want to get there?

This was followed by a small exercise where Mr. Sam Rufus asked the students to write down five things about themselves that they would like to hear from people in a week’s time. This helped them come to terms with the insecurities that they thought they possess and recognize their barriers to creativity.

Following this, Mr. Sam talked about **Paradigm Paralysis** which is one of the barriers to free thinking. It occurs when we are unable to see the picture from another frame of reference and unless we think differently, we will not be able to do things differently. Two words that always stimulate creative thinking are “**why not?**” He ended the session with **Reverse Brainstorming** where being stupid and ridiculous generates absolutely non-traditional ideas.



Mr. Sam addressing the students

Session 2

This session saw Mr. Rufus enlightening the students about the six thinking hats which are:

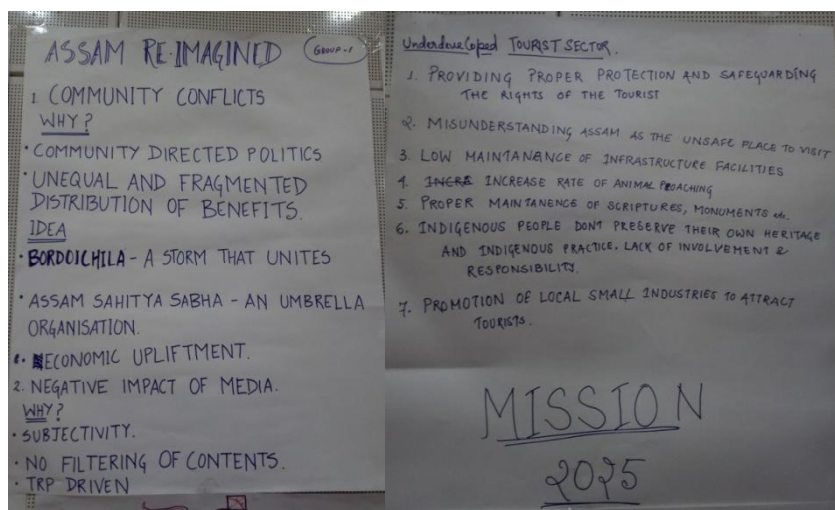
- **White hat:** Information gathering and processing.
- **Red hat:** The passionate hat. The phase where we let out our hunches and intuitions about the topic at hand.
- **Green hat:** Involves the generation of new ideas and additional alternatives. The creative hat.
- **Yellow hat:** This looks at how feasible the execution of an idea can be.
- **Black hat:** The caution hat. It prevents us from adopting an idea that may be non-profitable.
- **Blue hat:** It is for process control. It reviews the thinking done so far and asks for more hats if required. It analyses the thinking done so far and suggests the next step in thinking.

This was followed by another exercise where students were again sorted, this time in groups of 10, and were asked to think about “**Where can Assam be in 2025?**” and “**What are the various**

areas for social development in the state?” It was in line with the exercise conducted on the first day where students were asked to present on the various roadblocks to development in Assam.

Session 3

This session witnessed the documentation and presentation of the various information generated in response to the afore-mentioned questions. Students prepared multiple posters that represented the information in brief. Hence, day 2 ended with the application of white hat.



Posters prepared in response to Assam Re-imagined

DAY 3

Session 1

Day 3 began with the review of learning in Day 2. Then a Ted talk video by **David Kelley** titled ‘**How to build your creative confidence**’ was shown that talked about how **guided mastery** can help a person attain **self-efficacy** - the sense that we can change the world and that we can attain what we set out to do.

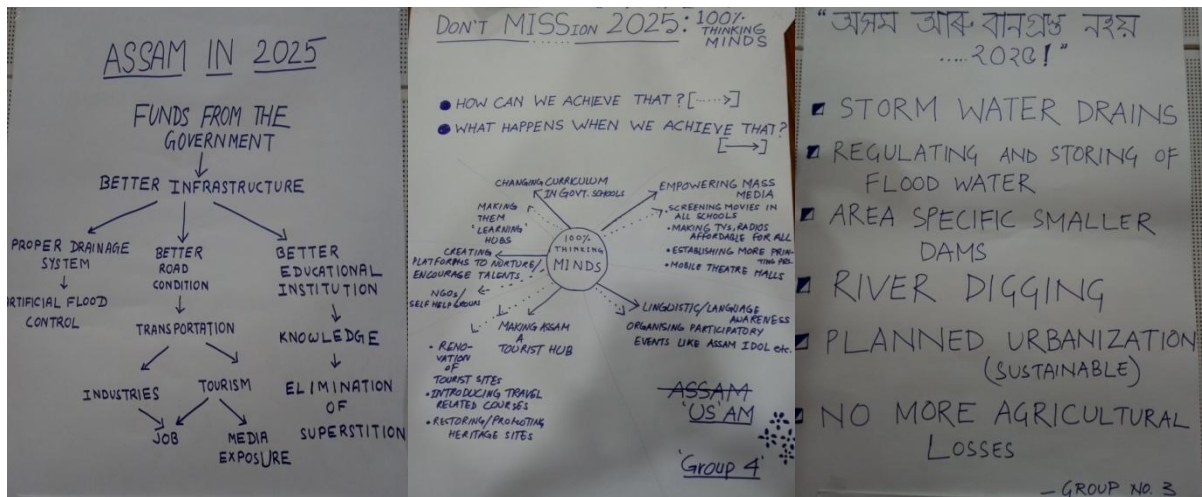
He then explained what an idea is all about. He personified an idea as **an orphan looking for adoption**. For an idea to be accepted it has to be **S.M.A.R.T**. This acronym stands for the words **specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound**.

Continuing with the previous day's exercise, Mr. Sam Rufus later asked the same group of students to select any one or more closely related opportunity areas for social development in Assam and generate ideas as to how when we work on those areas, the state can become a much better picture in 2025. This was the application of green hat.

Another Ted talk video was shown and this time it was based on an environmental issue. It was by the Bhutanese Prime Minister 'Tsering Tobgay' titled "**This country isn't just carbon neutral – it's carbon negative**". He talked about how despite consistent efforts, his country is still facing the wrath of the environment because the rest of the world is continuing to recklessly destroy and exhaust natural resources. He suggested that with slight empathy and consciousness, his country along with many others, can manage to live happily for years to come. This requires a few logical and creative solutions to the problems that the developing nations are facing right now, which will come to life only with the co-ordination of all other nations in the world.

Session 2

The ideas generated during the exercise in the previous session were now presented through posters by the different groups. When one group presented their ideas the rest of the groups judged the feasibility of the ideas. So, when one group was wearing the green hat the others did the job of the black hat.



Ideas presented to bring about social development in Assam

Session 3

The presentation continued through this session and by the end of Day 3, many unique ideas were discovered. Mr. Sam expressed his delight in the active participation of all the students and commented on how thinking and working together as a team was the key point towards achieving such a satisfying result.

DAY 4

Session 1

The day once again began with the review of the previous day after which another Ted talk video titled ‘**How the creative brain works**’ was shown. The video showed how the part of the brain that controls creative thinking and the part that controls logical reasoning are scientifically different regions. This was proved through an experiment in which by stimulating the human brain with certain exercises on a daily basis, the creative side of the brain became more and more active. This indicates that anybody can be creative as long as he/she keeps asking questions and keeps thinking differently.

Mr. Sam Rufus then talked about how for good creative thinking we must always ‘**Learn, Unlearn and Relearn**’. The essence of creative thinking laid in the 3 R’s – **Rethink, Reinvent and Reposition**.

The session ended with a talk on communicating for success which involved the **3 P strategy** – **Pitch, Persuasion and Presentation**. A good presentation must always provide a new perception to the audience. Rather than just being a row of words, it should be a **kaleidoscope of ideas** that forces the audience to think differently.

Session 2

The second session gave an insight into campaign planning and explained the step-wise strategy on how to create an outstanding campaign. It involves:

- **Strategic analysis:** Ask questions like ‘Who are your best prospects?’, ‘What appeals have the greatest leverage?’ etc. This will help us decide how and whom to approach through the campaign.
- **Problem/Challenge definition:** Keep asking ‘Is the problem truly the challenge?’ and make sure to state the problem well because what we say is as important as how we say it.
- **Consider multiple options:** Try and explore new and unexplored options.
- **Persuasion:** Important to target the right audience.
- **Competitive urgency:** Excite people to do something now and push them to respond.

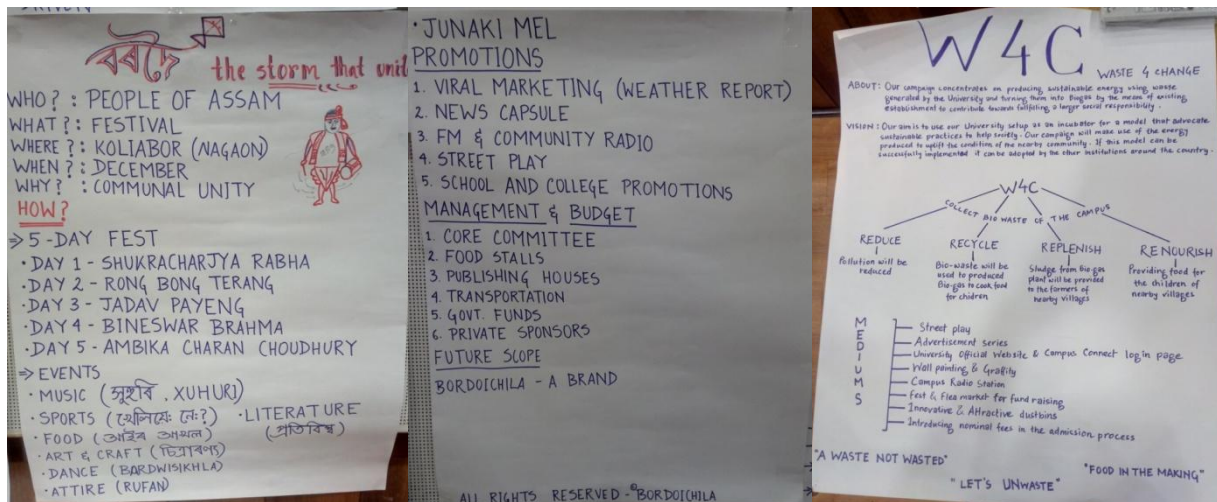
Session 3

The last session involved a group activity. Mr. Sam asked the various groups to prepare a campaign based on the many ideas generated on the topic “**Assam Re-Imagined**” in Session 3 of

the previous day. The day ended with all the students actively working in groups and preparing a full-fledged campaign that would be a collective solution to the various problems faced by Assam towards social development.

Day 5

This day had a single session which started with the review of the previous day. Then all the groups presented their campaign plan and exchanged reviews with the audience. Mr. Sam encouraged the plans and highlighted the unique characteristic of each. After all the groups were done with their presentations he shared his satisfaction with the overall performance and praised everyone's efforts.



Campaign plan

At the end, Mr. Sam Rufus gave a closing remark where he talked about his experience with the students in the five day workshop and urged the students to keep practicing creative thinking again and again until it grows to be a habit.

Dr. Anjuman Borah, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University gave the vote of thanks to Mr. Sam Rufus and a few students also shared their feedback.

CONCLUSION AND REMARKS

The five day workshop was accomplished as per expectations as it successfully served as a platform where the participants were actively engaged in sharing of ideas and opinions. It familiarized the participants with the concept of creativity and how it is a talent that we all own but are mostly unknown to it. It made the idea of thinking creatively attainable and interesting. After the workshop the participants also learnt how working together in a team can produce great results and stimulate one's creative side.

Creativity is very important in mass communication and journalism as originality is one of the key aspects of any successful media person and this workshop acquainted the students with the simple ways by which one can practice thinking creatively and gradually make it a habit. This habit will later become an indispensable asset for all the participants, not only in their field of work but also in their daily lives.