

REPORT

C Drive with Sam Rufus

Day 1
28 January, 2021

C Drive with Sam Rufus, a three day long online workshop on 'Creative Thinking' was organized by the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University from 28 January , 2021 to 30 January, 2021 . It was aimed at encouraging creative thinking practices among students and was attended by the students of both Mass Communication and Journalism as well as students of Communication for Development course.

Mr. Sam Rufus, founder director of EPIC (Enriching People in Creativity) introduced himself as a 'Learning Person', which in itself spoke volume about his experience and creativity. He started the session by unfolding the word 'Fundamental', where he guided the students to move beyond the idea of seeing 'fundamental' as 'basic', instead focused on it being viewed as something 'essential' . It was followed by the topic 'Why Creative Thinking is essential?'. He also said that we need to 'look through our ears and hear through our eyes' in the quest for creativity. Further, he explained every topic in a very creative and interactive manner, supported by a wonderful PowerPoint presentation.

The next topic of this session was 'What makes our brain tick?', where he explained the students that there is nothing called 'captive audience' and dived into AIDA (Attention, Interest ,Desire, Action) plan, which forms the basis of any marketing and advertising strategy. Touching the head, heart and feet of the customer were the three foundational pillars of any strategic planning. He also emphasized on the significance of selling a desire to a consumer and not the product. He stated that “Good is the enemy of great.”, when one is satisfied with the status of something being good, they don't strive for the greatest possible outcome. With that in mind, he led the student participants to the 'Black Cylinder exercise'. It was an extremely creative and innovative exercise where the students were asked to think out of the box reasons for 'why did the black cylinder fall?'. This exercise encouraged out of the box thinking and helped the students to indulge in creative thinking. He also talked about the importance of being a 'game changer' in today's competitive market space, where one has to constantly think creatively and see things in a different way than what others normally do. Not being different in Advertising could simply be a virtual suicide.

For the next part of the session, he briefly discussed about the barriers of creative thinking and assigned the next task i.e. “to identify the barriers to creative thinking and find how to breakthrough these barriers”. This was a group task where students were directed to different Zoom breakout rooms. Each team discussed and finally gave a presentation based on there discussion on barriers to creative thinking and solutions to these problems. This exercise helped the students to bring all that they learned in the

session to practical use. Along with the inputs from the students, Mr. Sam added the following to the list of barriers -Self Imposed Barrier, Victims of habit, Anemic Thinking, Easy Satisfaction and World of excuses .

The session was well planned and students were given stretch breaks to sink in what was discussed. The students were also given a post session activity-

For MA MCJ students, they had to identify a product/service presently being advertised and discuss what aspects of its campaign they found CREATIVE. And find what MEDIA has been used effectively.

(4 Groups had to make a 15 minute presentation each on the findings on Day 2.)

For MA C4D students, they had to identify a Social Issue campaign presently being advertised and discuss what aspects of the campaign did they find CREATIVE. And find what MEDIA has been used effectively?

(2 Groups had to make a 15 minute presentation each on the findings on Day 2.)

At last, he also took questions from the students and also enlightened them with his experience. He shared his experience of working with Nestlé's Milkmaid product , and gave the students some valuable insights on the game changing journey of Milkmaid.

DAY – 2

29 January, 2021

Mr. Sam Rufus , an excellent communicator and a creative thinker , began the 'day 2' with the powerful line- ' You can't think creatively , if you can't see things differently'. The first half was spent productively on the presentations of the student participants, who presented their own selection of advertisements/social issue campaign that they found attractive and considered highly creative. Made into 6 teams , the students turn by turn presented a range of advertisements and spoke extensively on the creative rendition, emotion and visuals of the selected advertisement . In the second half, after a quick revision of the lessons learned in day 1, he delved deeper into the concept of 'Creativity'. With the help of a box , he explained how conventional way of thinking limited our ideas only to the box and the untapped potential of creative thinking existed only outside that box. He urged the students to tap into the world that existed outside their boxes of conventional thoughts and ideas , and to think out of the box.

He also emphasized on why creative thinking is essential and how creative thinking is just another name for problem solving. He went on to explain how the problem solvers are actually the greatest creative thinkers, and a creative approach to any problem is essential to all. Elaborating on the three stages of creative thinking , he described Divergence, Convergence and Emergence as the three stages in the process, whereby the beginning happens by diverging into a world of concepts and new ideas followed

by convergence, where bundle of concepts are funneled down to a few, and finally we arrive at Emergence, where we get the final outcome of the creative thinking process.

After taking different viewpoints from the students on creative thinking, he explained how creative thinking is done . Simply knowing the importance of creative thinking wasn't enough, students had to know the process to undertake to think creatively . That is when he began discussing about the 'Thinking Hats' , which serves as a team based problem solving and brainstorming technique that can be used to explore problems, solutions and uncover creative ideas which are usually overlooked by others. Speaking on the 'White Hat' Thinking, he emphasized on the importance of prior research before starting with any project. Asking basic questions like ' What information do we have ?, What information is missing ?, What information would we like to add ,etc. The 'Green Hat' on the other hand required creative effort. It dealt with the conception of new and alternative ideas. The 'Black Hat' or the 'caution hat' represented the criticism against any idea or concept. Its main function is to critically analyze the proposed idea and prevent any mistake from happening. The last hat that Mr. Sam Rufus discussed was the ' Yellow Hat', which stood for optimism and looked into the ways through which the conceived idea could succeed.

'Why not?' as described by Sam Rufus serves the basis of disruptive thinking. A way of thinking which moves beyond the normally constructed way of thinking.

Further on ' Briefing and Game Planning' , the class learned what a creative brief stood for and how one could ask the '6 intrusive questions' while preparing a brief to make it effective . The questions are-

1. Where are we ?
2. Why are we where we are ?
3. Where do we wish to be ?
4. Why do we wish to be where we wish to be ?
5. How shall we get there ?
6. How soon shall we get there ?

These questions help in creating a proper client brief which positively effects the process of strategic planning for marketing and advertising. He ended the seminar by giving a project on marketing and adverting plan for the Mass Communication students and a strategic plan for social communication project for the Communication for Development students.

DAY 3
30 January, 2021

On the final day of the workshop, the students used the knowledge acquired from the previous days of the workshop to create new ideas and projects that didn't necessarily follow any textbook knowledge. The students of Communication for Development began the presentations, where one group developed

a Communication plan to launch “Education for skill. Skill for Earning” for the State of Assam and the other group discussed the idea of developing a communication plan to set up “Cooperative of Weavers for direct marketing of Assam silk to Fashion designers and High-end customers.” While the Mass communication students were split into two parts, two groups presented the marketing and advertising plan of a fruit juice and the other two on the marketing and advertising plan of a new innovative safety product against COVID 19. By performing a black hat thinking activity after every presentation, Mr. Sam Rufus gave valuable remarks on each of the presentation. The students were also encouraged to analyze and criticize the other projects. As the workshop approached the end, Mr. Sam Rufus concluded it with some fundamental ideas and concepts that he wanted to leave the students with. He spoke on how great advertising is a dialogue with the people , where a customer can be static but a consumer is a person with humanly qualities. He also quoted some great creative and communication experts and delved upon the effectiveness of a communication, which is not necessarily defined by the communication process but by the response. Creative thinking and creative innovation could even lead to migration of markets. He specifically emphasized on understanding that creative thinking alone was not enough, but an attitude towards problem solving and connecting dots was extremely crucial. Finally, the coordinator of the workshop Dr. Anjuman Borah presented her vote of thanks to Mr. Sam Rufus and also to the students for making this seminar into a highly interactive and productive event.

‘As a participant of the C Drive workshop, I feel this was an excellent workshop which enlightened us and cleared our doubts as well. It enriched us with the essence of creative thinking. I would like to thank MCI department, TU for this wonderful initiative.’ -Anubhuti Dutta, student of MA MCI, TU

‘It was an insightful event that encouraged us to think critically and present our ideas creatively. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the department and Sam sir for making this possible. I am sure I will benefit from this seminar in the years to come.’ - Hemasri Mishra, student of MA C4D, TU

‘While everyone emphasizes on the need to think creatively, Sam Sir showed us the path to be able to think creatively.’ - Akanshya Bhagabati, student of MA MCI, TU