

**OPENING ADDRESS**

*The Edward de Bono Seminar 2006*

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**Entrepreneurship and Creativity**

*Mr. Josef Camilleri*

*Chairman, Young Enterprise Malta*

As Chairman of Young Enterprise Malta entrepreneurship and creativity is something I come across everyday. Our mission, put simply, is to encourage our young people to develop these skills not just so they can make more money but also, and more importantly, to make them better people. So, what is the relationship between entrepreneurship and creativity?

The Young Enterprise Company Programme gives students aged 17 to 19 the opportunity to set up their own mini enterprise. Our motto is 'Learning by Doing', and we seek to instil in our students a sense of entrepreneurship in the traditional sense of the word. For most people, entrepreneurship means owning and managing a business. This is the occupational notion of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs make an active choice to start a new enterprise based on the perception that an unexploited or underexploited business opportunity exists.

There is of course, a second meaning to entrepreneurship. You don't actually have to own a business to be an entrepreneur. In reality entrepreneurship is something we can all practice, whatever we do in our lives. To be an entrepreneur you have to be someone who is prepared to recognise opportunities and to take risks. You have to be able to judge the possibilities of the situation you are faced with. This is not something that applies to our working lives but to everything we do.

So, the entrepreneurial spirit is something which we can apply to both our working and our social lives. To be an entrepreneur you have, first of all, to be creative. The Lateral Thinking techniques for which Edward de Bono is so well-known provide

excellent methods to achieve this aim, mainly because of the importance they attribute to 'possibilities', sometimes abbreviated simply as PO.

Simple and effective methods such as Lateral Thinking techniques can help nurture creativity and release the entrepreneurial spirit which Young Enterprise believes lies within us all. It is this belief which has led us, for some years now, to include workshops on the de Bono methods in the training programmes we run for our students.

So creativity and entrepreneurship are inseparable. But at the outset I stated that these skills are useful for everyone, not just those who wish to start their own business. How? Try starting any sort of association, be it a club, an NGO, or a society, that creates something that people did not think without creativity and entrepreneurship? In reality we are surrounded by social entrepreneurs, civic entrepreneurs and commercial entrepreneurs.

In the more generally acknowledged use of the term it is easy to see that starting a new business to exploit a perceived business opportunity leads to economic development which is beneficial both for the individual or group of persons concerned, as well as for the society or community where they operate. However, in a much broader sense, entrepreneurs produce value by sharing responsibility in developing new or ignored practices that could resolve some tension or relieve some disharmony present in their community, society or within the organisation where they are employed.

Many Maltese businesses still do not recognise the entrepreneurial and creative potential of their employees, sticking to rigid and counter productive management structures in which staff are simply told what to do. Operating an entrepreneurial model throughout your business, encouraging ideas and solutions from everyone, generates motivation and loyalty. Employees will feel that their working life is far more meaningful.

It is therefore essential that educational institutions at all levels – from primary school through to secondary, post-secondary and university education – take concrete action

to move away from preparing their students for a world of careers and move towards supporting the fostering of entrepreneurial skills, for the benefit of both the community and the economy.

Young Enterprise have done a great deal in the area of post-secondary education through their annual programme and I am pleased to announce the introduction of an entrepreneurship programme in primary schools that is expected to commence in a selected number of schools this coming October.

I understand that both the Edward de Bono Institute at the University of Malta, which is hosting this annual seminar, and the Education Division in Malta have done a great deal of work to foster flexible mind-frames through the teaching of the world-renowned de Bono methods, in primary and secondary schools since October 2000, and at the University of Malta since 1992.

On my part, I anticipate learning more about these methods in this three-day seminar which I am sure is an experience you are all looking forward to benefiting from.

Economic development involves the recognition of opportunities, the generation of *possibilities*, *plus* a skill for thinking outside the box. Entrepreneurship can be considered as a skill that can be taught and that applies as much to people who are employed and to those who are independent.

Therefore I will now pass on the floor to Professor Edward de Bono whose success world-wide in the field of innovation and thinking certainly cannot be understated. Thank you, Professor de Bono, for spending three mornings with us and for giving us this excellent opportunity to learn more about your methods which are so broadly applicable.