

WPP Group plc

# Time-and-Motion Man and The Mad Inventor



Dream Team for the Next Millennium  
*Jeremy Bullmore*

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Time-and-Motion Man  
and  
The Mad Inventor

All evidence suggests that successful companies become and remain successful by adopting two apparently contradictory policies. They then insist that these two policies cohabit in conditions of mutual respect and are meticulous in never consistently favouring one at the expense of the other.

They have no commonly accepted names, but one of the best and earliest descriptions of them comes from E F Schumacher's 1973 classic, *Small Is Beautiful*. In a passage about corporate organisation (quoted approvingly in 1997 by Niall FitzGerald, Chairman of Unilever) Schumacher writes:



“Without order, planning, predictability, central control, accountancy, instructions to the underlings, obedience, discipline – without these nothing fruitful can happen, because everything disintegrates. And yet – without the magnanimity of disorder, the happy abandon, the *entrepreneurship* venturing into the unknown and incalculable, without the risk and the gamble, the creative imagination rushing in where bureaucratic angels fear to tread – without this, life is a mockery and a disgrace.”

Here, wonderfully well evoked, are the two nameless and apparently contradictory policies. In honour of Schumacher, they might be known simply as Order and Disorder but that hardly does them justice. I like to think of them as Time-and-Motion Man and The Mad Inventor.

We know them both well, of course. But because the human mind finds paradox uncomfortable, we feel we need to side with one of them at the expense of the other: we cannot, we believe, be best friends with both. And we find it quite impossible to imagine that they could ever be partners – as indeed, it has to be said, do they. It is Time-and-Motion’s conviction that Mad Inventors have no place whatsoever in well-ordered corporate affairs; and every Mad Inventor knows that Time-and-Motion means the death of creativity and enterprise.

It was Schumacher’s great contribution to point out that much of good management consists in the reconciling and balancing of conflicting demands – while still retaining the ability to function; in much the same way, he said, as the successful management of societies consists in reconciling and balancing the conflicting demands of individual liberty and social cohesiveness. In theory, it seems impossible. In practice, we manage it every day.

The importance of Time-and-Motion Man to competitive business hardly needs rehearsing: and recessions and rumours of recessions remind us of it all the time. To achieve and maintain a low-cost base; to buy efficiently; to concentrate your points of manufacture; to manage money; to look always for less labour-intensive ways of doing things: to become leaner and meaner. No manager can doubt that, to have even a chance of sustained success,

today's competitive companies must be constant in their employment of the Time-and-Motion Man: "Planning, central control, accountancy, discipline – without these, everything disintegrates." Without these, you're dead.



And so the legitimate demands of Time-and-Motion Man have influenced company structures, company cultures – and company policies on recruitment and reward. Efficiency is honoured, waste is deplored; and quite right, too.

The mistake, of course, without budging for a moment from one's total commitment to Time-and Motion Man, is to believe that he is the only employee we need. And there are good reasons to believe that, in 1999, this could be a bigger mistake than at any time in commercial history.

Commentators are surprisingly agreed. Business – and businesses – are changing fast. There is a new alchemy around. Two 20-year-olds in a garage, without access to capital or raw materials or plant, can found a company that within 25 years will become the world's biggest.

Where once there was an industrial age, and then an information age, we're now well into the age of the imagination: an age where the price and availability

of knowledge and technology may favour the small over the large; the innocent over the experienced; the bold over the cautious; the inventive (and frequently wrong) over percentage-playing consolidators. An age where something called intellectual capital can make a nonsense of conventional balance sheets.

The nature of risk has changed, too. Because new thoughts can be test-flown so quickly, it may be a great deal more risky to do nothing than to do something. Too many management careers are still driven by the need to circumnavigate failure. In Silicon Valley, early failure is seen as evidence of enterprise and a necessary qualification for future support.

What all these changes are doing is to put an even greater premium on the value of ideas: product ideas, process ideas, distribution ideas, positioning ideas, brand extension ideas, communications ideas.

So increasingly, companies must look to their cultures and structures; because the structures and cultures that were installed at the insistence of Time-and-Motion Man are often hostile to challenge and unorthodoxy; to the free-thinking generation of new hypotheses; to the kind of habitat in which The Mad Inventor will flourish most productively.

The Mad Inventor invents indiscriminately; and will



promote his bad ideas as relentlessly as his good ones. He has only to hear of an accepted practice to know that it needs to be overthrown. He is vain, unreliable, and whimsical in his judgments. He despises timesheets. But The Mad Inventor – at least some of the time – is challenging the conventional, teasing out hypotheses, forging new connections, making new analogies – and haphazardly scattering seeds; some of which, in a few years' time, will become the harvest on which the whole of his organisation lives.

The happier he is in his habitat, the more fertile he will be. He does not respond gracefully to insistent micro-management by Time-And-Motion Man. If he feels the constraints of the corporate straitjacket, he will not succumb meekly and catch his usual 6.14 home. He will leave; even if he has nowhere else to go.

In his 1996 book *The Hungry Spirit*, Charles Handy echoes Schumacher: “Creativity needs a bit of untidiness. Make everything too neat and tidy and there is no room for experiment. Keep a tight rein on costs and there is no cash available to try new things or new ways. Cram your days too full and it’s hard to find time to think. We all need a bit of slack to give us the space to experiment.”

All good marketing case-histories celebrate the contribution of a great idea. But you can read a thousand and still be left wondering how great ideas happen. You will read about the market analysis that was done, the conclusions that were drawn, the strategy that was adopted. And then it says something like: “And so the Giant Platypus was born.” Two thousand words later we will have learned how the Giant Platypus has increased brand share by



10 percentage points and profits by several million – but the one thing we will not have learned is how the Giant Platypus came into being in the first place.

The idea may be a product idea, a positioning idea, a communications idea. You may be certain of only one thing: the precise circumstance of its emergence will remain forever unknown and unchronicled. And so it is always bound to be.



It is no good instructing Time-and-Motion Man to install procedures designed to optimise idea production on schedule and within budget. As Schumacher, Handy, and the chief executives of marketing communications companies know only too well, that is not the way that ideas happen. Increasing the quantity and quality of ideas is partly about recruiting a Mad Inventor or two – and at least as much about creating an environment in which Mad Inventors are honoured.

Commercial communications companies – advertising, design, public relations – are unusual. Their only raw material is information and their only manufacturing facility is the human brain. Data is delivered to the back door; is subjected to analysis, experience and interpretation; and is then transformed, after intense exposure to the imagination, into An Idea. These are companies who for all their lives have recognised the claims of both Time-and-Motion Man and The Mad Inventor; and have enjoyed some modest success in learning how to manage them.

The trick, of course, is to know when in the creative process to give precedence to each. There are times for rigour and there are times to fly.

And it is this experience, surely, that could be of far greater value to client companies in the future. If a conscious application of the imagination is to be extended into the corporate whole, if company strategy is to be as creative as corporate communications strive to be, then it would seem to make sense to adopt similar planning procedures.

The first stage is the selection and analysis of all relevant information: What is our current situation? How do we seem to our customers? How do we stand competitively? Do we see trends – and if so, in which direction? No room for whimsy, here. No room for guesswork or flair or approximations: just hard, rigorous, clinical interrogation. For outside advisers, the client company may well look to the management consultant. Time-and-Motion Man is in his element.

Then: What is possible for the future? What is our most desirable (practical) destination? Subtly, the rules of engagement change – because there’s now a need for speculation. The Mad Inventor, until now on the benches, is called on to the field.

If invited to speculate, Time-and-Motion man becomes unhappy. He is interested in a destination only if he can see immediately how to get there. By contrast, the Mad Inventor finds speculation irresistible – and can become irrationally committed to a destination whether or not there is discernible access to it. Between them, skilfully managed, an hypothesis is formed. Given the technology, given our knowledge and our foresight: this is where we could be.

And then finally: How do we get there? What actions, deeds, changes, inventions, investments do we need to make that will make our arrival at that destination most probable?

This, with a small roll of drums, is The Mad Inventor’s big moment. Because it is now that we need “the magnanimity of disorder, the happy abandon, the *entrepreneurship* venturing into the unknown and the incalculable...” It is at this moment (for the moment) that Time-and-Motion Man should be gagged and bound and left in the locker room. And where the advertising agency, the design consultant or the public relations counsel could be



involved and motivated and encouraged to think irresponsible thoughts; to supplement internal corporate resource; to augment “the creative imagination rushing in where bureaucratic angels fear to tread.”

Ideas do not have to be good ideas to be useful. Thinking impossible thoughts has a value. The deliberate suspension of censorious judgment may be the only way to liberate minds from the deeply-rutted convictions of earlier times. The imagination flies free.

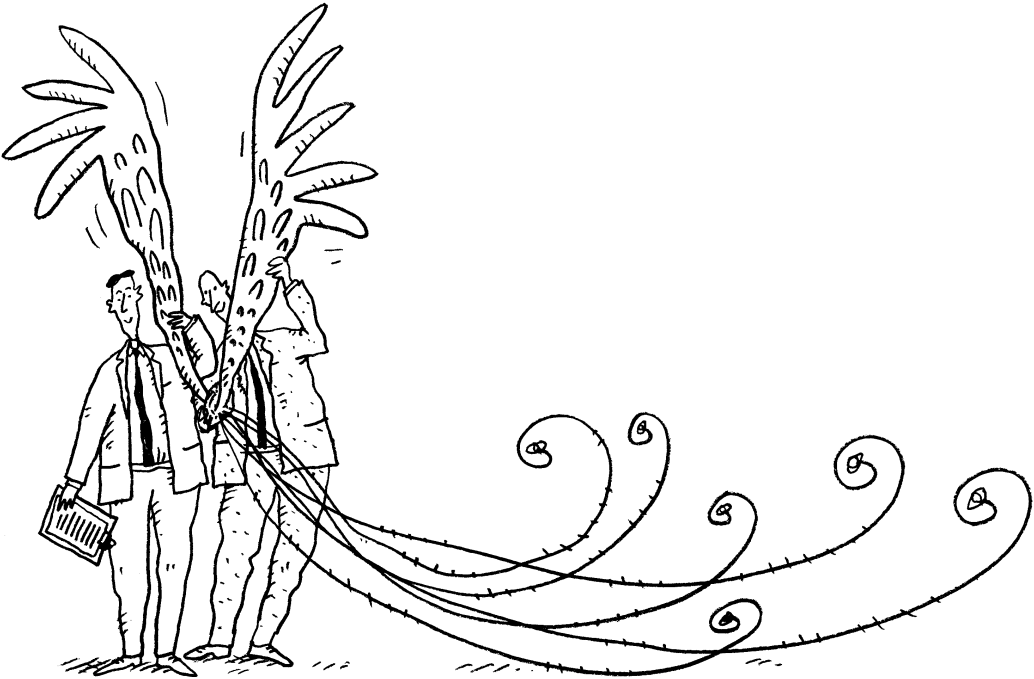
And then, of course, comes the final stage. The flying is over and rigour returns. Time-and-Motion Man is released from his bonds. Assessment begins.

But the scope of the opportunities and the richness of the landscape ahead will far exceed anything that a more responsible, methodical, deductive approach might have generated. And more efficiently, too; and a great deal more enjoyably.

As business learns to compete in the new creative age, the efficient exploitation of the imagination will be as critical to success as the exploitation of coal once was. And it would be good to think that some of the management skills and tricks that its communications advisers have painfully accumulated over the years could be brought more usefully and centrally to bear.

There are two final points to be made about Time-and-Motion Man and The Mad Inventor. They do not, of course, have to be men. And even more importantly, they do not even have to be two people. In most of us, there are traces of both Time-and-Motion

Man and Mad Inventor; though some of us may have a great deal more of one than the other. If the phrase 'managing the imagination' means any one thing, it is the ability to value both; to honour both; and to know when, as ringmaster, to give each of these star performers top billing.



## **Jeremy Bullmore**

Jeremy Bullmore was born in 1929. He went from school to National Service, then to Oxford where he spent two years not reading English. His first job, in 1954, was as a trainee copywriter with J Walter Thompson in London, and he stayed with that agency until his retirement in 1987. He became successively copywriter, writer/producer, creative group head and head of television; then from 1964 to 1975, head of the creative department and from 1976 to 1987, chairman, London. He was a member of the J Walter Thompson worldwide board and, from 1981 to 1987, chairman of the Advertising Association.

Since 1988 Jeremy Bullmore has been a non-executive director of the Guardian Media Group and WPP Group. He has continued to write and speak regularly about advertising and marketing (he is a columnist for *Marketing*, *Market Leader* and *Management Today*) and is currently President of NABS. He was awarded a CBE in 1985.

He is married to Pamela, a garden designer and writer. They have three grown-up children and live in London and Wiltshire.

The new, bumper edition of his book *Behind the Scenes in Advertising* was published in June 1998.

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## **Advertising**

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Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide  
J. Walter Thompson Company  
Conquest  
Cole & Weber  
Asatsu<sup>1</sup>  
Batey<sup>1</sup>  
Chime Communications PLC  
Equus<sup>1</sup>

## **Media planning, buying & research**

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MindShare  
Media Insight/Maximize  
Portland Outdoor<sup>1</sup>  
The Media Partnership<sup>1</sup>  
Tempus Group PLC<sup>2</sup>

## **Information & consultancy**

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### **The Kantar Group:**

Research International  
Millward Brown  
Kantar Media Research  
– AGB Italia<sup>2</sup>  
– BMRB International  
– IBOPE Media Information<sup>1</sup>  
– Symmetrical  
Resources/Simmons<sup>1</sup>  
Goldfarb Consultants  
IMRB International<sup>1</sup>  
Winona Group  
Center Partners

## **Public relations & public affairs**

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Hill and Knowlton  
Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide  
Timmons and Company  
The Wexler Group  
Carl Byoir & Associates  
Buchanan Communications  
Chime Communications PLC<sup>1</sup>

## **Specialist communications**

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### **Branding, identity & corporate consultancy**

Addison  
Banner McBride  
BDG McColl  
Brouillard  
Coley Porter Bell  
Enterprise IG  
– BPR<sup>1</sup>  
SBG Enterprise  
JWT Specialized  
Communications  
Scott Stern

### **Direct, promotion & relationship marketing**

A. Eicoff & Co  
Brierley & Partners<sup>1</sup>  
Credit Call Research<sup>1</sup>  
Einson Freeman  
EWA  
Mando Marketing  
Oakley Young  
OgilvyOne Worldwide  
Primary Contact  
Promotional Campaigns Group  
RMG International  
ROCQM  
RTCdirect  
The Grass Roots Group<sup>1</sup>  
ThompsonConnect Worldwide

### **Strategic marketing consulting**

The Futures Group<sup>1</sup>  
The Henley Centre  
Management Ventures  
MSI Consulting/Charles River  
Strategies  
Planners<sup>1</sup>  
Quadra Advisory<sup>1</sup>

## **Specialist communications**

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### **Sector marketing**

#### **Demographic marketing**

The Geppetto Group  
The Intuition Group  
Mendoza Dillon & Asociados

#### **Foodservice**

The Food Group

#### **Healthcare**

CommonHealth

#### **Investor relations**

International Presentations<sup>1</sup>

#### **PR and sports marketing**

PRISM Group

#### **Real estate**

Pace

#### **Retail**

Walker Group/CNI

#### **Technology**

Smith and Jones

#### **Media & technology services**

The Clever Group  
Savatar  
The Farm<sup>1</sup>

## **New media investments**

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NewsEdge Corporation<sup>2</sup>  
Media Technology Equity  
Partners<sup>3</sup>  
Media Technology Ventures<sup>3</sup>  
Peapod<sup>2</sup>  
Szygy<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate investment

<sup>2</sup>Minority investment

<sup>3</sup>Venture Fund

## WPP Group plc

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WPP Group plc  
27 Farm Street  
London W1X 6RD

Tel 44-171 408-2204 Fax 44-171 493-6819

WPP Group USA Inc  
309 West 49th Street  
New York NY 10019-7399

Tel 1-212 632-2200 Fax 1-212 632-2222