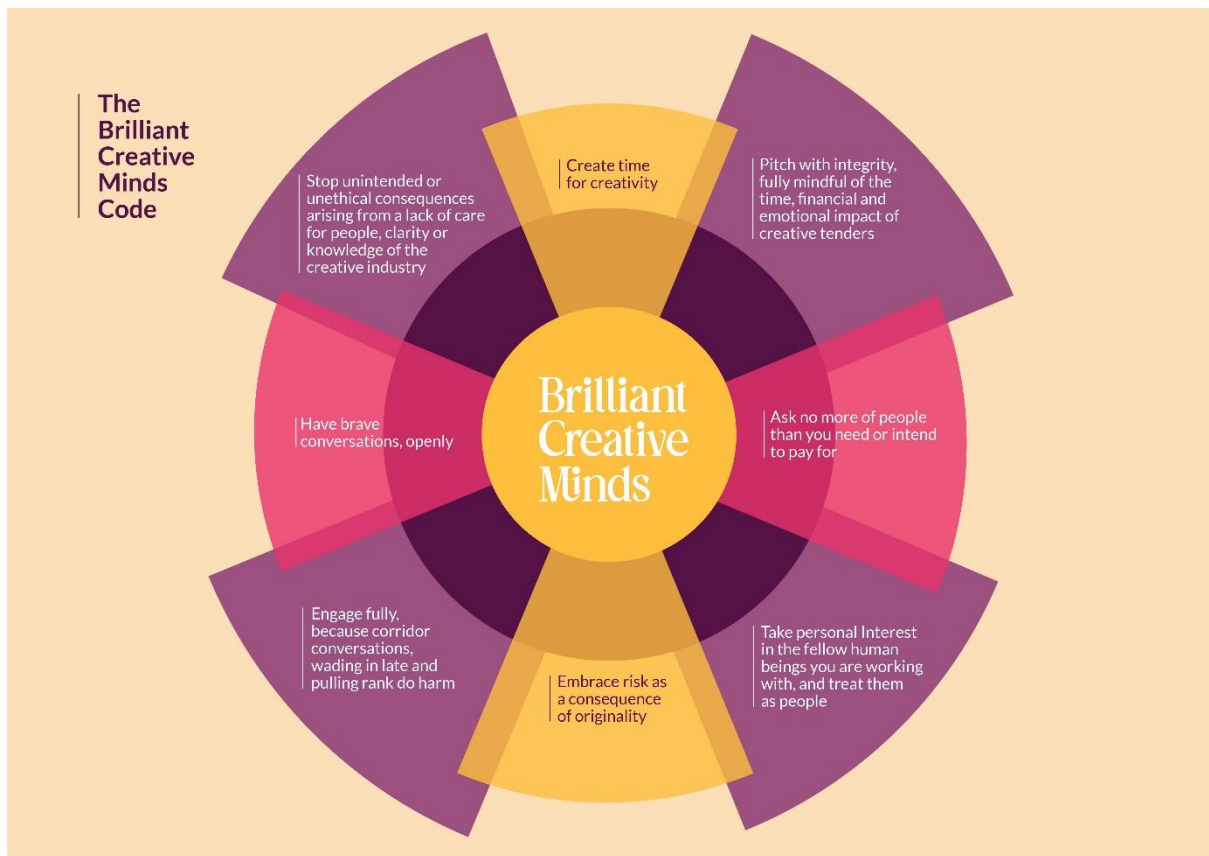


# Brilliant Creative Minds

## Brilliant Creative Minds – applying the Code's principles to real work



### 1. Create time for creativity

*"It is important to foster individuality for only the individual can produce the new ideas."*

Albert Einstein

In a business world governed by deadlines and budgets it's important to remind ourselves of the one thing that sets our business apart, creativity. No other industry can solve multimillion pound client problems with a simple idea. But creative

brilliance needs nurturing. Time is short in the modern workplace but what we give our time to is a choice.

- Step away from your desk – Creative inspiration needs regular external input from nature, culture, and other areas of life outside of work. Understand the importance of topping up your creative resources – having fun with friends, getting enough sleep and exercising are important for both mental and physical health.
- Feed your creative brain – Neuroscientists advise of the creative benefits of doing activities with a defined beginning, middle and an end. The brain enjoys completing simple tasks such as reading a book or cooking a meal and these simple pleasures can actually help foster creativity.
- Expand your relationships, reference groups and media consumption to be able to creatively and authentically generate creative ideas that reflect the needs of all consumers.
- Stop squeezing timelines. Even the most brilliant creative brief cannot make up for lack of time to develop Great Work. With so many stakeholders involved, agreeing briefs and budgets can take a long time and create significant delays. When the sign-off process overtakes planned timings, the very purpose of that brief is compromised. If managing stakeholders' time is beyond your control (as it often is), then involve your creative team early to give them scope to think on your brief - and even help you to refine it - in advance of the official creative briefing.
- Believe in your brilliant creative mind – creativity needs confidence, energy, authenticity, and unique individuality. Surround yourself with a supportive network of individuals who will empower you to succeed and support you when you fail.

## **2. Embrace creative risk, as a consequence of originality**

Place trust in each of our individual sector's expertise. We all want Great Work. Yet Creativity can only thrive when we all feel confident and respected for our unique contributions.

Too often creative thinkers are asked to be brave and innovative, yet decision-makers reject ideas that are not already tried and tested. Too often, risk aversion results in failure to make the impact sought or needed.

- Balance risk vs impact: Before you begin the creative process discuss and agree the level of acceptable risk, in order to allow for greater creative freedom and expression.
- Encourage brave ideas: Alternatively, give your creative teams licence to present ideas that push boundaries, without fear of judgement or reprisal.

### **3. Pitch with integrity, fully mindful of the time, financial and emotional impact of creative tenders**

Pitching and tendering is the life blood of our industry and a time for exciting collaboration and teamwork, but the pressure and demands can be huge for some. This calls for expert management of the pitch process and respectful, empathetic leadership from all parties involved.

The pitch process if mismanaged can have the potential to create an unhealthy and imbalanced relationship, right from the outset. Similarly, through mismanagement a great procurement process, designed to ensure fairness and appropriate use of funds can have (mostly unintentional) negative consequences; consequences that make them unethical in practice and cause enormous stress. Unreasonably short deadlines, constantly shifting timelines, and 'sham' pitches where agencies are invited to bid to make up the numbers are just three examples of unethical practices that hinder the wellbeing of talent in our industry.

- Pitch with integrity: Consider pitching with the same thought, clarity and fairness as a recruitment process.

### **4. Stop unintended or unethical consequences arising from a lack of care for people, lack of clarity, or lack of knowledge of the creative industry**

Collaborating with clients, agencies and procurement and many third-party suppliers in the course of creative development can lead to complex relationship management, with multiple objectives and numerous – sometimes – conflicting priorities.

It is essential therefore, that all involved understand each other's business, the processes they are bound to and the areas that can cause stress and pressure. So that they can be managed better to protect our industry's brilliant creative minds.

- Understand the business – Take time to learn and appreciate the motivations, drivers and pressures of each of the companies or organisations involved and share your individual company processes and goals for deeper understanding and teamwork.

*“Diverse teams have been shown to be more likely to radically innovate and anticipate shifts in consumer needs and consumption patterns – helping their companies to gain a competitive edge. Inclusion and diversity are an essential enabler to recovery, resilience and reimagination, post covid...”* Diversity Wins, Why Inclusion Matters, McKinsey & Company, May 2020.

The business case for diversity is also proven and well documented – and very relevant – to the Code and fostering creativity. Diverse teams improve the profitability of companies, and the development of innovative and creative work.

- Check yourself – Who do you usually turn to for advice, ideas, and consultation at work? Make sure you are consulting with a diverse range of people for maximum inclusion and optimum creativity for our business.
- Create space and time for everyone – It's reported that people from marginalised groups are more likely to be spoken over in meetings and less likely to speak up. The result is that we are missing out on vital feedback and creative ideas. Be mindful of this and make sure you allow everyone the space to share their brilliance.
- Call out bad behaviour – if you don't feel that your meetings are inclusive, or that important voices are consistently being left out, or that inappropriate terminology and 'in-jokes' are stalling the progress of inclusion and diversity, then call it out. Allyship is about action and challenging the status quo.
- Provide safety – As managers and leaders ensure that the principles above are supported and built into your culture to encourage people to feel safe and able to speak up.

## **5. Ask no more of people than you need or intend to pay for**

We know that the ethics of asking agencies to give away so much creativity for free in pitches is questionable. We have all experienced tenders where the requirements are disproportionate to the financial compensation on offer. We know that the long hours culture typical of creative industries is unacceptable and damaging to health and productivity. We know that it's unfair when commissioners expect a lot more than their budgets can stretch to, and that it's usually the team that bears the brunt. We know. But it still goes on.

- Be mindful of unmanageable workloads and how work pressures can lead to poor mental health and lower performance and creativity levels.
- Consider all of individuals in the chain and ensure your requests are not 'over and above' what they have been hired to deliver.
- Keep tender and pitch requirements proportionate to the value of the contract on offer. Bear in mind that 'free' usually comes at a cost to the people expected to do the work.
- When hiring placements always ensure individuals are paid fairly and never engage in unpaid or underpaid work.

## **6. Have brave conversations, openly**

Clear, open communication, free from misunderstanding and misinterpretation supports good mental health. Conversely, poor mental health can lead to feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, low mood, irritability and withdrawal from others and a lack of desire to collaborate.

For everyone to be their creative, best selves we need to ensure that the energy we bring to every interaction contributes to the positive mental health of others.

Transparency removes ambiguity and allows everyone to commit to the job to be done.

- Communicate clearly and respectfully in person and over email. Reread your messages and ask yourself – will the recipient feel empowered, respected, and inspired to act?
- Check your tone and ask yourself regularly would I send that message to someone on my level, more senior, or more junior, to ensure you're not creating power levels and fear in the more junior ranks.
- Empower everyone to speak up, be brave and challenge negative interactions that stifle creativity and contribute to poor mental health.
- Regularly ask for 360 feedback at all levels across all working party sectors for a cycle of continuous improvement.

## **7. Take personal interest in the fellow human beings you are working with, and treat them as people**

Empathetic, supportive collaboration and leadership are key drivers in good mental health and wellbeing at work. It's vital that everyone feels supported to deliver their best work and that colleagues, managers and leaders alike have a good understanding of their employees, so that they can put an individual's, unique needs at the forefront.

- Take a personal interest in your colleagues and take the time to understand their background, history, experiences, circumstances, and their unique role in and out of work.
- Share your values and encourage others to share theirs with you from both a personal and company perspective. Knowing what matters most to colleagues and which values they hold highest will give you better insight into their motivations and mental health triggers.
- Flex your style – With this deeper understanding of your peers, adapt your style to ensure your tone and approach is tailored individually, for optimum creative outputs.
- Role Model healthy, respectful, empathetic approaches to encourage others to adopt a healthier style for improved mental health for all.
- Promote open conversations around mental health to reduce stigma and ensure everyone feels able to access mental health support whenever they need to.

## **8. Engage fully, because corridor conversations, wading in late and pulling rank do harm**

When you are time-poor, it is tempting to dip in and out of the creative process – delaying reviews, skipping meetings or saying you'll catch up with individuals later.

Creative reviews opportunities to have open and brave conversations that shape ideas – productively and cost efficiently. The creative process is an inclusive one.

The common habit, prevalent among over-committed senior leaders, of only being partially engaged is damaging, too. Failing to be fully present triggers negativity among people, such as frustration and confusion. It can be a leading cause in costly delivery setbacks, such do-overs, time wasting and off-brief outcomes.

Creative outputs can elevate awareness or trash reputations; change hearts and minds or fall short of stopping harmful behaviour. They warrant your full attention.

- Stop yourself when you know others need to be part of your conversation too
- Schedule regular, face to face reviews – it's amazing how much can be achieved in a short period of quality, two-way communication
- Anyone can have a great idea or make a game-changing observation – lend your ear to the whole team
- Strong ideas need robust interrogation – by restricting conversation, the glaringly obvious is missed; golden opportunities lost.

## **Where can you get further support?**

NABS is the charity for everyone working in the advertising and media industry offering expert, impartial and friendly advice. The NABS team are passionate about this industry and recognise it can only be as good as the people who work within it.

If you need support, guidance, advice, coaching, therapy, or someone to simply listen, call our Advice Line today 0800 707 6607 or visit us online [here](#).

## **Protecting Your Mental Health - The Legal protection**

Below we have collated some useful information and advice (from [Mind](#)) to ensure you and your colleagues understand the protection provided by law, if you are experiencing mental health problems.

Sometimes people who have mental health problems are treated worse at work because of their mental health condition. This is called discrimination and, if you experience discrimination at work, you may have a legal right to challenge it.

### **Quick facts**

- The [Equality Act 2010](#) is the law that gives you the right to challenge discrimination. This law may protect you from discrimination when you:
  - are applying for a job, at work, made redundant or dismissed (covered in these pages)

- use services or public functions (see our legal pages on [discrimination in everyday life](#))
  - buy, rent or live in property (see our legal pages on [discrimination when buying, renting or living in property](#))
  - are in education
  - join some private clubs and associations.
- To get protection under the Equality Act, you usually need to show that your mental health problem is a disability. 'Disability' has a special legal meaning under the Equality Act. To find out if your mental health problem is considered a disability, see our page on [disability](#).
  - If you have a mental health problem that is a [disability](#), and you want the protection of the Equality Act, you will probably have to [tell your employer](#) about it.
  - Generally, employers can't ask you questions about your mental health [before a job offer is made](#), though there are [some exceptions](#).
  - If you think you have experienced disability discrimination at work, there are several things you can do to [challenge the discrimination](#).
  - It's best to resolve disputes informally if you can. But if you cannot sort your problems informally or by raising a formal grievance, you can [make a claim to the Employment Tribunal](#). If you are successful, the Tribunal has power to award you financial compensation (money) and/or make a recommendation (for example, recommending that your employer makes [reasonable adjustments](#) to help you at work).
  - If your work problems do not count as disability discrimination, you may still have [other employment rights](#).