Creativity without chaos? Sure!

Creativity is a much-hyped topic in Singapore. There is constant chatter in the media and ministerial speeches about how creativity is the key to Singapore's continued prosperity.

Recently, architect William Lim commented that we need to have chaos to have creativity. But if there is one place lacking in chaos, it is Singapore.

One example is the IMF-World Bank meetings held here last year, which were executed with finesse.

It is safe to say that Singapore will never do away with its clean and efficient brand that has taken decades of effort to build up. So the real challenge is to build a creative Singapore in the absence of chaos.

Singapore is already associated with the expression "world class", be it airlines, infrastructure or banks.

But the new world order is "out-of-this-world", and no longer just better than the rest.

To push the boundaries of creativity, everything that is done here should be not just one in a million, but also never been done before and almost impossible for someone else to do.

One way to make everything unique in Singapore is to infuse local culture with the things we do.

To experience a city that is creative to the core, go to Dubai.

Almost everything that they do is hair-raising.

Examples include the Palm Islands, the three largest artificial islands in the world; the World, a collection of man-made islands shaped after the continents; the Burj al Arab, the world's tallest hotel; and the SnowDome, the third largest indoor ski slope in the world. All this, in the middle of the barren desert.

Some of this "dare-to-do-anything" attitude can take Singapore places too. It's never too late to learn from others.

The effort has to come from the bottom of the ladder too. Just look at the youth park behind Cineleisure at Orchard Road. Never quite having caught on, it remains deserted most of the time.

Individuals need to take the initiative, be actively involved, and capitalise on available opportunities.

Apple's offices in some cities have a "fireman's pole" cutting through the top floor to the first level. It's the fastest way to get down. Employees actually use it!

It is always good to have role models to inspire you.

Ever heard of a sprinter who never had a coach? The same applies to enhancing creativity.

One local role model who instantly comes to mind is Ms Elim Chew of 77th Street lane. Everything, from her hairstyle and personality to her merchandise, is infused with creativity.

You just have to meet her once or attend one of her seminars to feel the "out-of-the-norm" vibe she exudes. This is something that has made her very successful.

We should identify exemplary individuals who have been extraordinarily successful due to their creativity. Not just locally, but globally.

Starting a business? Look to Richard Branson (Virgin) or Steve Jobs (Apple). Want to contribute to society? Learn from Bono (Red) or Mohammad Yunus (Grameen Bank). There is never a shortage of examples.

It is unrealistic to expect Singapore to become chaotic just to foster creativity. So we must make an effort to become a hub of creativity by building on the efficiencies and (close to) perfections that already exist here.

Doing extraordinary things, taking individual initiative and seeking inspiration from others would help us reach the destination much faster.

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