

Breaking Free of Linear Thinking to Improve Team Productivity



Building cognitive skills such as critical thinking, emotional intelligence and cooperation doesn't end when the final diploma has been granted. The teams who perform at their highest are constantly exercising and growing these skills like they would any other muscle. Despite the pervasive belief that our ability to learn peaks at a young age, as we get older and gain more cognitive experience, our brains actually find more effective ways to learn, which is encouraging given the pace in which we're required to adapt to new technology and changing demands in the professional space.

Sonny Russell, Vice President Northeast-Mid Atlantic Region for KinderCare, is witness to the impact of growing cognitive skills every day. At KinderCare, the nation's largest provider of early childhood care and education, he's responsible for the oversight of numerous operational units in different locations that require him to constantly seek how to keep his team engaged and ensure they're working in the most efficient and productive manner. Add to that his travel schedule visiting some of the 1,400 KinderCare centers—logging roughly 100,000 miles a year—and you'll understand why he's mastered the art of note-taking to capture his ideas whether he's in the office or working remotely.

Getting Back to Paper after the Promise of Tech

An early adopter of technology, Russell was on the hunt for a device that would allow him to quickly jot down ideas and edit them at a later time. Though he'd been essentially paperless, writing on a tablet felt awkward and he couldn't find a stylus for his smartphone that had the right pressure sensitivity. He also tried typing his notes on a laptop, but was frustrated because he couldn't easily add sketches or mark up the page with his signature thought bubbles. He also said he “missed the tangible connection” he felt when writing by hand, which even researchers agree provides better subject comprehension and retention than typing on a keyboard. What's more, he felt that his writing was clumsy; not his actual handwriting—which he admits is akin to chicken scratch—but the content itself lacked the oomph it had when he wrote on paper.

Fortunately, about a year ago, Russell was introduced to his first Bamboo smartpad and loved that it combined the natural feel of writing with pen on paper with the technology that allowed him to quickly save, edit, review and share files from anywhere. In the past, he would fill up notebooks, go through the chore of transcribing his notes and then have to flip through multiple pages to search for certain paragraphs or key words. He was also constantly having to organize and recycle old notebooks just to make room for new ones. With the Bamboo smartpad, he could easily archive and return to past notes when necessary. He could write up notes on the plane, convert his handwriting to text, then share them with his assistant back in the office.



Experiencing the New Workflow

Upon noticing this new protocol, his assistant suggested he teach his team how he used his Bamboo Folio to take notes, build agendas and even create custom dashboards for strategic planning sessions. Learning how to use his Bamboo Folio was so simple, Russell was confident he could pass on this knowledge to his staff quickly. With a nod to the educational principles of his company, he gave Bamboo Slates to his team so they could play around with them and experience the benefits of note-taking and sketching on regular paper with the digital functionality to quickly save their work and share it with colleagues. It wasn't long before his staff was incorporating Russell's practice into their day-to-day, including an appreciation for his style of "bubbling" on documents where he adds comments, sketches and follow-ups to documents that were formerly very linear—something he couldn't do with a laptop or tablet.

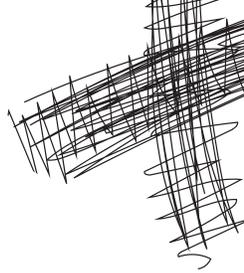
Since then, he's noticed not just a more streamlined workflow from his team, but an improvement in their creative thinking and problem solving. He attributes this to various factors at play after ditching their laptops and tablets in meetings and adopting the Bamboo smartpad instead. First, meeting attendees were more engaged and focused on the task at hand, no longer distracted by email notifications or the temptation to multitask. He says, "Too often, people are tied to their devices and checking either their email or Instagram which is not only a distraction from the work at hand, but also gives the wrong impression professionally." Russell feels the same holds true for those who are typing in a meeting; consider the optics of a room full of people whose heads are lowered and are frantically typing on their laptop or smartphone.

Writing, Relaxing and Creativity

What's more, the freedom to write by hand meant his staff weren't limited to linear responses, but could build out their ideas with sketches, charts or annotations, enabling more critical thinking. Of this he says the ideas became "more tangible, less robotic." There's also an element of fun that happens when you're encouraged to doodle and sketch when working; employees can relax and focus on solving problems through creative thinking. Russell adds, "If more people would take the time to write—whether an email or an agenda—they'd actually find more meaning in their work."

Fortunately, learning isn't a finite process as long as we push ourselves to find new ways to challenge our current thinking. Whether it's exploring new technology or discovering how to streamline that to do list, joy can be found in gaining knowledge. As creative thinking becomes more relevant in the corporate world, it's important to seek ways to teach employees how to find new ways to problem solve and think critically. Luckily for Sonny Russell and his team, doodling on a Bamboo Folio is all in a day's work.





BAMBOO™ Folio



Bamboo Folio, large

Protective cover
with pockets



Simple
notepad
insert

Ergonomic
triangular
design

Smart ball pen

Multi-function button

Micro-USB
charging port

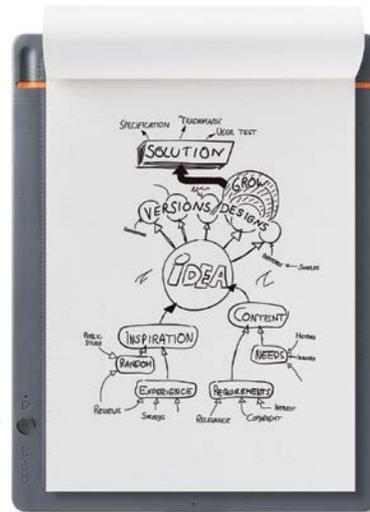
BAMBOO™ Slate



Bamboo Slate, small



Bamboo Slate, large



Simple
notepad
insert

Ergonomic triangular
design

Smart ball pen

Multi-function
button

Micro-USB
charging port

To learn more about Bamboo smartpads, please contact your Wacom Business Manager, Matt Klinke: matt.klinke@wacom.com

