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# **SERENDIPITY MANAGEMENT AS A MODEL FOR FOSTERING ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY IN THE POST-COVID PERIOD<sup>1</sup>**

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*„Management is too important to leave to the managers.“ (Apello, 2014)*

*„Everybody is a manager.“ (Schell, 1960)*

## **ABSTRACT**

This article explores the topic of developing creativity in the organization, a specific area of the so-called serendipity management related to sudden discovery, which can lead to a competitive advantage. This is an under-explored area that requires its re-actualization in the current turbulent times, especially in the post-covid era, where adjustments will be needed not only to management style and organizational culture, but also to find new organizational skills inside and outside the organization. One of the most important untapped potentials in organizations is the creativity of employees. Therefore, management needs to change the whole mindset to adapt to new business conditions. The article provides an overview of the characteristics and specifics of creativity management, with special emphasis on the interpretation and description of the concept of serendipity and serendipity management, from classical man-

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agement literature to modern knowledge and successful business case studies. Finally, the author concludes that to put employees and their creativity first, which is called the employees-first paradigm, it is necessary to approach changes in organization consciously and proactively and at all organizational levels - from strategic to operational level to improve organizational performance. Most importantly, it is necessary to set strategic frameworks for this adjustment, but also to involve employees in this process, not forgetting that the organization is, in essence, a social construct. Today, it is more important to be a successful leader than to be just effective but only rational, technical manager. The main task of the leader is to build trust and restore the value of employees in the company, making him a kind of 'social architect', as Bennis pointed out in the classic literature. The concept of serendipity management needs to be further developed, both in economic practice and in scientific research, because it has already shown its first results, but it has not yet found a place in the literature and practice that rightfully belongs to it.

**Keywords:** *inventive business models, creativity management, serendipity management, employees-first paradigm, post-covid era*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a post-covid-19 period when there is significant uncertainty and suspense caused by several external factors such as high inflation, the oil crisis, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and others. In these circumstances, it is necessary to adopt a new paradigm of business management that will be in line with the current times of the 'new normal' and turbulent environment, a paradigm that will be based on resilience, flexibility, and adaptability.

In this article, the author emphasizes the importance of creativity management, with a focus on serendipity management, which was neglected in the classical paradigm of management, and certainly deserves a more significant place in current conditions. Cunha, Clegg and Mendonça (2010) state that, while it is sometimes presented as an element of organizational learning, the term serendipity management has rarely been addressed *per se* by organizational scholars. Dew (2009; p. 735) states: "Despite their significance, the serendipity of many events goes unrecognized (and even denied) for long periods of time." In this article author gives an overview of the basics of the concept of creativity management, both in the classical literature and in the new socio-economic conditions and describes two interesting case studies – examples of two successful Croatian advertising companies that encourage creativity in every segment of their business. In the final part of the article author offers recommendations and guidelines for further research and practical implications.

The author considers creativity management with an emphasis on the model of serendipity management as the optimal solution when it comes to placing employees in the first place in the organization, or the so-called employees-first paradigm, which experienced its full actualization in the era of the covid-19 pandemic. The author is of the opinion that this, as well as other similar business models, should find their application in modern management so that modern business organizations can successfully cope with the extremely difficult business conditions of today's world. The starting thesis is that the solutions should not be sought at all costs only in the external environment of the organization, but that it is important to use all the existing internal resources, especially knowledge, creativity, strength, and power of a new way of thinking and new ideas from employees.

The contextual framework for serendipity management is not clearly defined. Malmelin and Sari Vita (as cited in Cunha, Clegg & Mendonça, 2010) state that serendipity has received some attention in earlier organization and management studies, but due to the breadth of research areas covered by the concept, it is not easy to clearly delineate the areas covered by serendipity, which can be an indicator for further research and discussions.

## **2. MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP IN A POST-COVID ERA**

In the UN document 'A Conceptual Framework for Analyzing the Economic Impact of COVID-19 and its Policy Implication' Hevia and Neumeyer state: "The Covid-19 pandemic is one of the most serious challenges the world has faced in recent times. The total cost in terms of human lives is yet to unfold. Alongside the cost of lives and deep health crisis, the world is witnessing an economic downfold that will severely impact the well-being of large parts of the population in the years to come. ... Understanding the association between different elements of the problem to broaden the policy space, with full awareness of the economic and social effects that they may bring." (UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020, p. 3)

In his invited lecture Vrdoljak-Raguž (2021) discusses leadership in the time of crisis and the post-covid-19 future of the organization. She states that in May 2020 Deloitte published a paper titled "Leadership in the times of COVID – 19". In that paper, they discuss the uncertainty that has made leadership more complex because in times of COVID- 19 leaders face numerous "leadership dilemmas" that do not have simple answers, as the author states. In Deloitte's paper, they also discuss five fundamental principles, or pillars, of resilient leadership during the COVID-19 crisis. Those pillars are: design from the heart and head, put the mission first, aim for speed over elegance, own the narrative, and embrace the long

view a resilient leaders can drive all these actions. The manager must be able to think, act and react. It is very important to emphasize that leadership in crisis also needs leadership styles for the uncertain future. New leadership styles are embracing a more trusting, flexible, and supportive approach to different models of employee engagement while ensuring that productivity is maintained, and outcomes are achieved. "The new challenge for leaders is how to manage different team dynamics and a need for new management practices that are based on hybrid approaches and models. ... At the center of organizational success in the "new normal" will be the supportive, shared, and empathetic leadership style based on trust, communal relationships, and social exchange relationships." (Vrdoljak-Raguž, 2021, pp. 117-118)

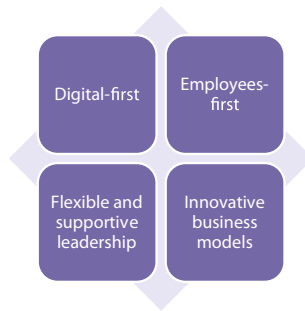
Hjorth (2012) agrees with the idea that today the flexibility of an organization is so important that it is metaphorically, a 'dancing organization' (Figure 1). „We wanted to say that organizational creativity, play and entrepreneurship could potentialize a new 'white canvas', an open 'dance-floor' for us all to playfully enter." (Hjorth and al., 2018, p. 157.)

**Figure 1.** 'Dancing organization' – a metaphorical figure



In this context, Krajnović (2021) notes that the era of the covid-19 pandemic put emphasis on the employees-first and digital-first management paradigm, placing these concepts in the context of a new approach to knowledge management in organizations (Figure 2). Zutschi et al. (2021) advocate for innovative alternatives in management practices that can contribute towards invigorating human creativity, while Yagnik et al. (2020) suggest that management uses creative principles to deconstruct and reconceptualize the management paradigm, on the example of marketing management and brand management.

**Figure 2.** Foundations of successful leadership in the post-covid era



*Source: author's work, according to Yagnik et al., 2020; Krajnović, 2021; Vrdoljak-Raguž, 2021; Hjorth, 2021; Zutschi et al., 2021*

### **3. CHARACTERISTICS AND SPECIFICS OF CREATIVITY MANAGEMENT**

Today, the thesis that the transformation of management into leadership is necessary is increasingly accepted. Within this thesis, the manager is a leader to be followed, a role model for employees who gets the best out of them. In that sense, Warren Bennis (as cited in Peters & Waterman Jr., 1982, p. 85) calls the new leader a 'social architect'. Earlier literature speaks about that. Thus, for example, Selznick in his 1957 volume entitled *Leadership and Administration: a Sociological Interpretation* says: "The inbuilding of purpose is a challenge to creativity because it involves transforming men and groups from neutral, technical units into participants who have a particular stamp, sensitivity, and commitment. This is ultimately an educational process. ... The art of the creative leader is the art of institution building, the reworking of human and technological materials to fashion an organization that embodies new and enduring values. ... To institutionalize is to infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand. The prizing of social machinery beyond its technical role is largely a reflection of the unique way it fulfills personal or group needs. Whenever individuals become attached to an organization or a way of doing things as a person rather than as technicians, the result is a prizing of the device for its own sake. From the standpoint of the committed person, the organization is changed from an expendable tool into a valued source of personal satisfaction. ... The institutional leader, then, is primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values." (Selznick, as cited in Peters & Waterman Jr., 1982, p. 85) These theses clearly indicate that in the current socio-economic moment, the key factor for achieving success is strong leadership, as well as motivated, loyal, and creative human potential, which Selznick noticed many decades ago.

In his book *Inventive manager* Srića (1994) describes creative thinking techniques as a useful 'tool' for encouraging employee creativity. The author states that most of these techniques had been developed in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, both in science and in practical management. Furthermore, he states that initially, these techniques began to be used to help in solving the problem of technology development and new production programs, after which they expanded to marketing and advertising, to find their application today in systems analysis and strategic management. He further states that today these techniques are applied in educational institutions, scientific institutions, and public administration.

Dibb et al. (1991) also state that brainstorming, as probably the best-known technique of creative thinking, as well as incentives and rewards for good ideas are, as they cites 'typical internal means of stimulating the development of ideas' (p. 255). As an example, he mentions that the idea for 3M *Post-It* self-adhesive yellow papers came from one employee. As a member of the church choir, he used paper ribbons to mark songs in his songbook. Because the pieces of paper kept falling out, he suggested developing a paper sticky on the back side of it. (Ingrassia, 1983, cited in Dibb et al., 1991, p. 255). As another example of encouraging employee ideas, Hewlett-Packard's model keeps its labs open to engineers 24 hours a day to help generate ideas: it also encourages its researchers to set aside 10% of their time researching their own ideas for new products. (Lewine, 1989, as cited in Dibb et al., 1991, p. 255).

In his interview, the co-owner of the world's successful communication agency Bruketa & Žinić & Gray [B&Ž&G], Nikola Žinić (2022), states: "Creativity never slows down and can only help you stand out in more demanding times. The industry has certainly changed, starting from the way we work, or the remote work that we were forced to implement literally overnight, to the fact that as a result, we have some new trends like metaverse. ... Creativity is the only constant here. ... Hard times are just looking for creativity and it is creativity that makes the difference."

Creative thinking workshops are widely used in branding and designing the visual identity of companies. In his article *Live rebranding – Creative workshop* Barić (2019) states that imagination is the centerpiece of the branding and rebranding process. He states: "Creative workshop is a key moment in the rebranding process. Everything happens here: from cutting out collages, writing down ideas on a board that follows and a bunch of post-it notes, all the way to constant communication between creators (brands), who rethink their brand during the workshop. He describes the creative workshop, which he calls a fantasy workshop, as follows: "Everyone is involved. The company's team solves various tasks, dreams, imagines, and writes ... At one moment they

look like playful children, and at another, they discuss the channels through which they will access the foreign market.” Nikola Žinić (as cited in Barić, 2019) states: “It is important in these creative processes to throw out everything you think, and without any censorship, so that later, through a synthesis, we can assemble those parts and come up with a solution. These workshops will not immediately provide us with concrete and tangible results, but they will break down Omo Labo’s (the brand, which was rebranded, author’s remark) story into its component parts, which will serve us in the final process of rebranding.”

From the above-mentioned, almost by-the-book examples to some recent examples of successful models of encouraging employee creativity, it can be concluded that a change of mindset must be in the first place, as well as the value of employees, in terms of their role in the organization. However, they should, above all, feel ‘as in their own skin’, completely unfettered in expressing their creative ideas and thoughts. The previously mentioned author Srića said: “Methods for encouraging creative thinking are designed to help us overcome ‘problems in solving problems’. Their very application puts us in a position where we must challenge traditional approaches and ‘rate’ the conventional boundaries of human knowledge. These methods force us to move away from the rigidity and certainty of ‘logical’ solutions, to question old habits of thought and remove the influence of those attitudes, assumptions, approaches, beliefs, norms, and value judgments that could stifle our imagination. Their application directs us beyond the obvious, to seek solutions in unexpected and unusual places.” (Srića, 1994, p. 280) In order to oppose this creative approach to solving the hitherto dominant, technical-rational approach, Srića confronts these two concepts (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Creative approach and rational approach to problem solving

<i>Creative approach</i>	<i>Rational approach</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attempt to understand the situation, task or problem</li> <li>- Data collection</li> <li>- Analysis of the situation and data</li> <li>- Incubation (letting the understanding of the problem mature)</li> <li>- Inspiration (generating ideas)</li> <li>- Synthesis (connecting several ideas into a whole)</li> <li>- Verification of ideas and comparison with desired goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Precise definition of a situation, task or problem</li> <li>- Setting goals to be achieved</li> <li>- Formulation of a hypothesis</li> <li>- Data collection</li> <li>- Processing of collected data</li> <li>- Identification of available alternatives that can solve the problem</li> <li>- Choosing the most favorable among the alternatives</li> </ul>

Source: Srića, 1994, p. 271

#### **4. SERENDIPITY MANAGEMENT AS A SPECIFIC CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION MANAGEMENT MODEL**

In their 2009 paper, Kakko and Ikinen explain in detail the phenomenology of creativity and serendipity management. They emphasize the need for a human-centric approach and talk about innovative individuals – *homo creativus*. They advocate “new, innovative, and stimulating approaches to management” (p. 537), which are based on encouraging creativity. They believe that serendipity management will become one of the leading topics in the near future, which will be encouraged, as they say, by preconditions such as: diverse social networks, which are becoming a natural habitat for new knowledge workers; the diverse working teams, etc. Having this in mind, it is interesting that the new *Employees First* paradigm was developed at the same time, and one of its founders, Vineet Nayar (2010), describes it in the book *Employees First, Customers Second: Turning Conventional Management Upside Down*. In this book, the author emphasizes the meaning of unlocking the potential of employees by fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, decentralizing decision making, and transferring “the ownership of change” to the employee in the value zone, thus also advocating the same concept. Later, during the pandemic, this paradigm gained its full form in several successful companies.

Kakko and Inkién, in the aforementioned paper (2009), place serendipity management in the context of the innovation process, strategic planning, and leadership culture in organizations. They state that in the concept of serendipity management the emphasis is on incidental and give the definition of serendipity management as follows: “Serendipity is an incidental, non-planned encounter, which can nevertheless result in a better outcome than intended. ... Serendipity can thus be described as a certain fortunate coincidence, beneficial accident, and positive collision.” (p. 540) Among the earlier authors who have researched this concept are Roberts (1989), Eyre (1999), and others (Kakko & Inkién, 2009). Nguyen (2022, p. 1) states: “Despite appearing centuries ago, the term “serendipity” has only become fashionable, and its concept has been systematically studied by scientists quite recently.”

In the context of management, the term serendipity is defined as “the concept where you attract curious talent in order to find unexpected, emergent, tacit competence by using facilitation and trust management in very diverse environments.” (Kakko & Inkién, 2009, p. 541) Online dictionary [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com) defines the term as follows: „Definition of serendipity: the faculty or phenomenon of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for; also: an instance of this.”



Napier and Vuong (2013, pp. 178-179) state that the management literature that has tackled the concept, typical characteristics that emerge include:

- Unsought, unexpected, unintentional, unanticipated event or information (Cunha et al., 2010)
- Out of the ordinary, surprising, anomalous, inconsistent with existing thought, findings or theory (Brown, 2005; Van Andel and Bourcier, 2002)
- An alertness or capability to notice what others do not, to recognize, to consider, and to connect previously disparate or discreet pieces of information (De Rond, 2005), to solve a problem or find an opportunity.

“Serendipity management is understandable through methodological tools and benefits, which have a role to play in:

- workspace design - both: physical and virtual;
- encouraging unexpected ideas and collective insight and building creative teams
- supporting the emergence of new combinations of competencies and thus develop a new generation of creative ideas.” (US Senate, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, 2009)

Table 2. shows the comparison of the paradigms of project management and serendipity management.

**Table 2.** Comparison of the characteristic of project management and serendipity management

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Project management</i>	<i>Serendipity management</i>
Approach	Project	Journey, exploration
Type of innovation	Directional	Intersectional, sustainable
Type of human resources	<i>Homo faber</i>	<i>Homo ludens, homo aestheticus-informaticus, homo creativus</i>
Organization	Fixed in the beginning	Flexible during the process
Focus	Effective process	Best possible result in the end
Structure	Closed innovation	Open innovation
Mission	Goal decided in the beginning	Vision decided in the beginning
Competence search	While defining the project	Training camp approach
Resources, time schedule	Fixed	Flexible
Management style	Command and control	Connectivity and collaboration

Source: Kakko and Inkinen, 2009, p. 542

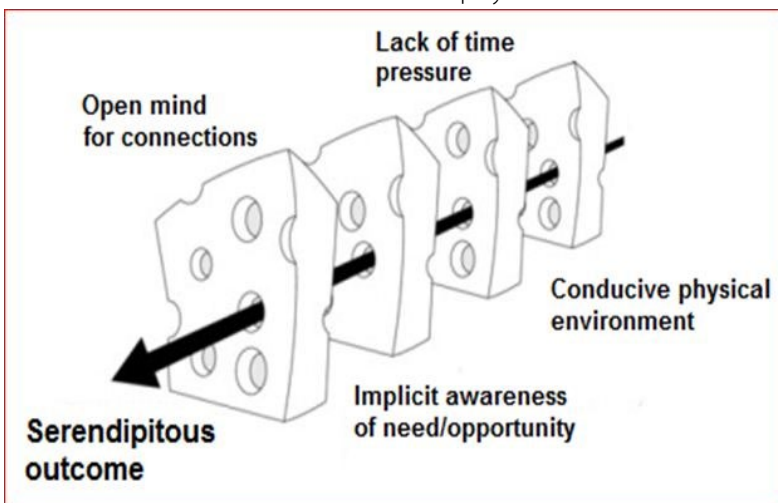
Roberts, as cited in Kakko and Inkinen (2009), state that the concept of serendipity is actually very old, and mention three principles of Archimedes, Columbus finding America, a sick Indian discovering quinine, Sir Isaac Newton and the law of gravitation (pp. 540-541). More recent examples are smallpox vaccina-

tion, synthetic rubber, celluloid, rayon, insulin, X-rays, nuclear fission, substitute sugar, safety glass, penicillin, nylon, polyethylene, Teflon, Aspirin, Post-it, the discovery of the structure of DNA, Viagra, shortmessaging technologies (SMS), etc. (Roberts, 1989, as cited in Kakko and Inkinen, 2009, pp. 540-541)

What is interesting to mention is the fact that the name of the concept refers to a Persian fairytale from the 6th century, i.e., the story of three princes traveling through Serendip, showing exceptional ability to predict, or find ingenious discoveries for the time and space in which the story sets. "The princes were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of." (Remer, 1965) The name comes from Serendip, an old Persian name for Sri Lanka (Ceylon), hence Sarandib by Arab traders (Merton & Barber, 2006).

Obviously, the clear condition for achieving serendipity is the ability - the quality of thinking to find something unexpected, when actually doing something else. The prerogatives for serendipity are: awareness, wisdom, happiness, but also personal characteristics. (Kakko & Inkinen, 2009) A creative person "connects ideas, sees similarities and differences, has flexibility, has aesthetic taste, is unorthodox, is motivated, is inquisitive and questions societal norms. A creative person and tolerant of the different and the ambiguous. He or she also searches for the elegant." (Kakko & Inkinen, 2009, pp. 538-539). Makri and Blandford (2011) presented the so called 'Swiss cheese' model of serendipity (Figure 3). In a serendipity context, the model suggests that serendipitous outcomes might only occur given the correct internal and external conditions. (Makri & Blandford, 2011).

**Figure 3.** The 'Swiss cheese' model of serendipity



Source: Makri & Blandford, 2011

The concept of luck in entrepreneurship and management has also been researched in organizational theory. During previous research, the managers believed that a part of their business success occurs due to luck. "If a sudden event or idea occurs that turns into something that bears fruit and added value, it will largely depend on how much the individual is able to discover and seek a deeper insight into something. Therefore, "being lucky" is most often a matter of preparedness, not the result of "mere luck" or chance. (Serendipitor, 2013). Chandler believes that over-focusing and analyzing past events, especially at the individual level, is often very inefficient, and does not lead to results. That is why it is important to focus more on future potential, than on the past mistakes. Apello states that management is increasingly asking questions that are aimed at the desire to change other people. In this regard, he states that: "This attitude is a reflection of the traditional approach to management: one person manipulating the behaviors of others. When it comes to working together in organizations, managers are mistaken, workers are misled, organizations are misbehaving, and many people feel miserable. While at the same time the happiness of workers is crucial because happy people are more (Apello, 2014) Professor Andrew Oswald, Dr Eugenio Proto and Dr Daniel Sgroi from the Department of Economics at the University of Warwick carried out a number of experiments to test the idea that happy employees work harder. In the laboratory, they found happiness made people around 12% more productive. ([www.sciencedaily.com](http://www.sciencedaily.com))

## CASE STUDIES

In his paper, Björneborn (2017, p. 1053) states: "Purpose Serendipity is an interesting phenomenon to study in information science as it plays a fundamental - but perhaps underestimated - role in how we discover, explore, and learn in all fields of life". In his paper, he attempted to operationalize the concept of serendipity by providing terminological "building blocks" for understanding connections between environmental and personal factors in serendipitous encounters and came to the conclusion that there are different degrees of diversifiability, traversability, and sensoriality in a physical or digital environment that may correspond with different degrees of personal curiosity, mobility, and sensitivity – and lead to different degrees of serendipity. "Basic factors in the ways we interact with the world are thus at stake in serendipitous encounters: to what degree environments can be diversified, traversed, and sensed – and to what degree we are curious, mobile, and sensitive." (Björneborn, 2017, p. 1076)

Therefore, it is necessary to set up an appropriate digital, but also a spatial and social platform for the application of the serendipity concept – a pleasant

and inspiring work environment, surroundings, and community. The same can be observed in the context of the preferred type of human resource (Table 2): *Homo ludens*, *homo aestheticus-informaticus*, and *homo creativus* versus *homo faber*. Two positive examples are featured below.

**Case study 1. Studio Sonda, Vižinada, Croatia**

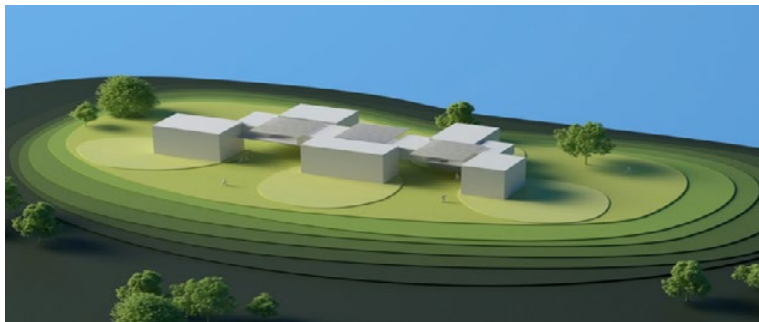
The world-renowned advertising studio Sonda has been applying the serendipity approach for a long time. Through an inspiring external and internal environment, it affects the motivation and inventiveness of employees. They put special emphasis on excellent communication with the local community. Their motto is: "Participate in building the community and society..." It is interesting to note that the company is based in the small town of Vižinada (1158 inhabitants), near Poreč in Croatia (Istria peninsula). They believe that "the center of the world is where you create it." They have an extremely interesting interior design, but also a stunning environment (Figures 2-4). ([www.sonda.hr](http://www.sonda.hr))

**Figure 2.** Medieval Istrian town Motovun - view (surroundings of Studio Sonda)



Source: [www.sonda.hr](http://www.sonda.hr)

**Figure 3.** Preliminary design of the Creative Center in Vižinada



Source: <https://dizajn.hr/blog/studio-sonda-pokrece-kreativni-centar-u-vizinadi/>

As a company that greatly encourages the creativity of its employees and associates, Studio Sonda has designed a Creative Center, which encourages the creativity of other community members such as: clients, locals, business partners and others, but also serves as a gathering place. The Sonda Studio website states the following: „At the opening held on Saturday, June 4th, '22 the Sonda Creative Center was officially opened. In the next few years, the aim is to show by concrete examples how much creativity can affect the development of a community.“ It is important to emphasize the project 'Designed by People', within the Sonda Creative Center. In Studio Sonda state: „'Designed by People' is a program of workshops that involved individuals with no previous knowledge or experience. Over the course of two months, six participants who usually have various daily jobs, had participated in the design of the Elan skis, which were then produced and will be presented at the opening, and which will eventually be available for official sale. Together with us, the participants had the opportunity to go through the whole process of product design, do practical tasks, visit the factory and ultimately observe the promotion of a new product. "Designed by People" will become a regular practice of the Creative Center, and Sonda will act as a link between clients and their products and people who want to encourage their creativity, and so far have not had the opportunity to try to create concrete, market-relevant products.“ ([www.sonda.hr](http://www.sonda.hr))

**Figure 4.** Employees of Studio Sonda socializing with the local population (with local agricultural products)



Source: [www.sonda.hr](http://www.sonda.hr)

Case study 2. Creative work space (created by Bruketa&Žinić&Grey, Zagreb, Croatia)

The following is a description of the case of the B&Ž&G agency, which designed the so-called Office for Superheros for the company Infinum. Office for superheroes serves as a spatial 'platform' for more creative work of employees and their pleasant stay in the workspace. On the web site of the Agency

Bruketa&Žinić&Grey, they state: „One of Croatia’s most successful software companies, Infinum, which mostly exports its services to foreign markets, is continually growing. While their employees work with digital spaces, the physical one they work in day-to-day had at one point become too small. For help they turned to Brigada, an agency with a number of award-winning office spaces under its belt. They placed the new office just a few floors above the already existing one, at the top of Zagreb’s newest skyscraper in Strojarska ulica. This location above the city, as well as the company’s success, brought to mind superheroes, and that idea is subtly present in all the material used, details, and the overall approach to the design.” (Figure 5, 6) (<https://bruketa-zinic.com>)

**Figure 5, 6.** Office of Superheroes, Brigade for one of the most successful Croatian software companies Infinum



Source: <https://bruketa-zinic.com/hr/2016/10/26/ured-za-superjunake>

*In his article Six Examples of Creativity at Work, Ware (2020) explains that marketing, graphic design, and similar business areas that lean toward creativity are not the only ones that allow creativity to be fostered. In this sense, he lists six areas, which he calls Six Examples of Creativity as follows:*

*Example 1: Creativity in Leadership*

*Example 2: Creativity in Marketing*

*Example 3: Creative Problem Solving*

*Example 4: Creativity in Sales*

*Example 5: Project Management Can Benefit from Creativity*

*Example 6: Creativity When Handling Interpersonal Issues.*

The article *Best Innovation Practices - Creativity Management* ([www.1000ventures.com](http://www.1000ventures.com)) describes six cases of successful implementation of creativity in companies. The key characteristics of those creativity fostering models, classified according to Ware's Six Examples model, are shown in table 3.

**Table 3.** Analysis of several successful models of creativity fostering, according to Ware model (2020)

<b>Company</b>	<b>Business sector</b>	<b>Creativity fostering model</b>	<b>Example – area of creativity fostering according to Ware model (2020)</b>
Silicon Valley	IT sector	<i>Five minute rule</i> - the rule permits anyone to suggest an idea (brainstorm sessions)	Example 3 - Creative Problem Solving
Dell Inc.	IT sector	Encouraging people to approach a problem from a different perspectives	Example 3 - Creative Problem Solving
HP	IT sector	<i>Hewlett-Packard Way</i> : agreeing on HP values and objectives; employee empowerment	Example 1: Creativity in Leadership
Creativity@Work	Consulting services	Encouraging employees to play a role in order to get people out of their habitual responses	Example 3 - Creative Problem Solving
Toyota	Automotive industry	<i>Toyota Production System</i> – stimulates employee creativity and loyalty but also on a highly efficient network of stakeholders	Example 3 - Creative Problem Solving
GE	Manufacturing	<i>GE Work-Out</i> : 'Those closest to work know it best'; Companies must be boundaryless to unlock their potential	Example 3 - Creative Problem Solving
BIG Project – KENT (project supported by the European Regional Development Fund)	IT	IT-Powered Brainstorming Sessions: <i>BIG – Brainstorming Innovation Group</i> - a new method to support creative thinking in small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) and other groups, using computer software during brainstorming sessions to elicit and capture ideas in a more professional and flexible manner than traditional methods	Example 3 - Creative Problem Solving

Source: author's work according to Ware (2020) and *Best Innovation Practices - Creativity Management* ([http://www.1000ventures.com/business\\_guide/cs\\_creativity\\_mgmt.html](http://www.1000ventures.com/business_guide/cs_creativity_mgmt.html))

*It can be noticed that most of the analyzed examples refer to areas 1 and 3 according to the Ware (2020) model, but it can be concluded that there are no firm boundaries between the areas where it is possible to develop creativity, but rather these areas are intertwined, and ultimately they are all aimed at encouraging employee creativity, inventive management and creative problem solving.*

## **5. APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF SERENDIPITY MANAGEMENT - MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RESEARCH GUIDELINES**

A report from the ADP Research Institute revealed that only 18% of employees are fully engaged, versus a whopping 84% who are "just coming to work." (Lever team, 2019) Deloitte (2016) finds that American businesses lose productivity worth \$300 billion annually due to disengaged workers. Despite this reality, research finds that only 11% of companies have a highly inclusive work environment.

This requires a new approach to employees in encouraging their engagement, but also the development of organizational creativity.

Vrdoljak-Raguž (2021) and Krajnović (2021; 2022) analyzed the most important managerial implications for the new postpandemic era. The following is a synthesis of their theses.

The current new era is characterized by the following phenomena and trends:

- The post-normal era
- The Big shift - a great transformation of society
- New society and globalization
- Reduced predictability
- New social ecosystems, new opportunities for cooperation, online communication
- Information flow (vs. 'fixed' information in libraries and databases)
- New types of entrepreneurs - intrapreneurs (innovative entrepreneurs - encourage internal entrepreneurship and exchange of ideas in the company).

The key managerial guidelines for the post-covid period are as follows:

- Communication
- Creativity



- Social and environmental sustainability.

Serendipity means a discovery, it is achieved through a combination of: observation, wisdom and luck. It is a very important concept to foster the organizational creativity.

The research (Deloitte, 2020; author's research) showed the following:

- Not all managers managed to cope with the response to the crisis. Some have failed due to lack of flexibility.
- In crises, employees expect answers to questions and everyone looks to the leader.
- Research conducted in most of the world's companies indicated that in the first place during the pandemic were: People and Digital Technology (so-called employees-first and digital-first technology).
- In addition to focusing on people, it is very important to come up with several planning scenarios.
- Great importance is attached to innovation management and innovation culture.
- In crises, there are no simple answers, meaning it is present the so-called leadership dilemmas. That is why it is even more important to involve employees in creating ideas in crises.
- Management must be resilient and courageous. Managerial performance design: heart and head ('Stand with your feet firmly on the ground, but with your head up in the sky!') - think with your head, but allow your imagination and intuition to act.
- Mission-first (What is the purpose of the organization?)
- Speed, not elegance - quick decision making.
- Narrative (company story; purpose of the company - for clients, employees, community, external stakeholders)
- Long-term perspective
- Trust is very important - build a culture of trust
- Ambidexterity leadership - at the same time encourage new jobs and ideas and strengthen the old ones (to the extent and where necessary)
- Time pressure - the importance of time management
- Emotional stress
- Very important is the flexibility of the organization ('dancing organization').

The 'new manager' in the post-covid era:

- Creates innovative teams
- Supports creativity, is involved, empathetic
- Invests in internal and external social relations
- Encourages the creation of hybrid models (work from home and office work)
- Encourages flexible organization (reduces rigidity)

- Encourages employee protection (including medical, psychological, etc.)
- Delegates responsibilities
- Encourages a stakeholder approach.
- Encourages social responsibility.

There is also a need for strong shift in the theory and practice of management - from control and giving orders (*command chains*) towards the principles: Ask employees; Listen to employees, Discuss performance with them. Constant connection and support are important for the employees. Example: one-on-one meetings - important questions: What do I need to focus on? How do I work? Where am I going? (And where is the organization going?)

The general recommendation to managers can be: take a break, talk to your employees. Talk about them, and about their life, but also about the future of the company, its goals and performance, the place and role of employees in the company, find out the drivers of employees.

At Deloitte (2022), they conclude that the key formula for success in the post-covid period is to 'move beyond responding to the immediate crisis, towards strategies for accelerating recovery'.

As guidelines for further research, factors influencing the emergence and encouragement of creative thinking in the organization should be further explored, as well as business models that develop open, creative and inclusive communication in the organization. Dew (2009), for example, highlights the first factor mentioned and states: "The notion that some serendipities become venues for action, and some not, raises a second implication: when are serendipities more likely to occur and be acted upon (or not)?" (p. 747) In further research, the serendipity management concept needs further validation in physical and digital environments. (Björneborn, 2017)

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Ancient social systems relied on stars and prophets to predict the future. In today's modern society, this role of successfully predicting the future has been taken over by science. Setting clear strategic goals significantly reduces uncertainty and increases the chances of success. However, the use of only rational, mathematical models in strategic management, which can not completely replicate the real world, cannot give quality results in these turbulent times. Therefore it is necessary to adopt a business strategy which combines rational and innovative business models, which are based on encouraging creativity of employees and other stakeholders. In this sense, we need to turn to business models that are not only opportunity-oriented, but that can also successfully face threats. One of them is unpredictability. Faced with a post-pandemic and

many other socio-political and economic turbulences, we only now know and live unpredictability in the full sense of the word. One of the newest directions of successful crisis and strategic management is serendipity management. The essence of this direction is to create a successful business opportunity from the unpredictable.

Today, a successful manager is at the center of a network of social and psychological interactions of individuals inside and outside organizations, and is strongly influenced by environmental forces. In order to encourage employees to become *homo creativus* versus *homo faber*, the key role should be played by the management of the organization. We need to develop a managerial style that encourages discovery, a new way of thinking of managers and employees and the search for new solutions, on the trail of the thesis: "Discovery means to see what everyone else sees and think the way no one else thinks." (Szent-Györgyi) Only such creative organizations, individuals and teams will be able to successfully face the challenges we live in.

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## SERENDIPITY MANAGEMENT KAO MODEL ZA POTICANJE ORGANIZACIJSKE KREATIVNOSTI U POST-COVID-19 RAZDOBLJU

### SAŽETAK RADA:

Ovaj članak istražuje temu razvoja kreativnosti u organizaciji, i to specifično područje tzv. serendipity managementa povezanog s iznenadnim otkrićem, koje dovodi do stjecanja konkurentske prednosti. Ovo je nedovoljno istraženo područje koje zahtijeva svoju reaktualizaciju u sadašnjim turbulentnim vremenima, posebice u post-covid eri u kojoj su potrebne prilagodbe ne samo stila upravljanja i organizacijske kulture, već i pronalaženja novih organizacijskih vještina unutar i izvan organizacije.

Jedan od najvažnijih neiskorištenih potencijala u organizacijama je kreativnost zaposlenika. Stoga menadžment treba promijeniti cjelokupni način razmišljanja kako bi se prilagodio novim uvjetima poslovanja. U radu se daje pregled karakteristika i specifičnosti menadžmenta kreativnosti, s posebnim naglaskom na tumačenju i opisu pojma serendipity i serendipity menadžmenta, od klasične literature do suvremenih spoznaja i studija uspješnih poslovnih slučajeva. Konačno, autorica zaključuje da je za stavljanje zaposlenika i njihove kreativnosti na prvo mjesto, što se naziva paradigmom employees-first ('najprije zaposlenici'), potrebno promjenama u organizaciji pristupiti svjesno i proaktivno i to na svim organizacijskim razinama, od strateške do one operativne, kako bi se poboljšala organizacijska učinkovitost. Ono što je najvažnije, potrebno je postaviti strateške okvire te prilagodbe, ali i proaktivno uključiti zaposlenike u taj proces, ne zaboravljajući da je organizacija, u biti, društveni konstrukt. Danas je važnije biti uspješan vođa nego biti samo učinkovit, racionalan, 'tehnički' menadžer. Glavna zadaća lidera je izgraditi povjerenje i vratiti vrijednost zaposlenicima u poduzeću, što lidera ujedno čini svojevrsnim 'društvenim arhitektom', kako je Bennis istaknuo u klasičnoj literaturi. Koncept serendipity menadžmenta treba dalje razvijati, kako u gospodarskoj praksi tako i u znanstvenim istraživanjima, jer je već pokazao svoje prve rezultate ali još nije pronašao mjesto u literaturi i praksi koje mu s pravom pripada.

**Ključne riječi:** *inventivni poslovni modeli, upravljanje kreativnošću, serendipity management, paradigma employees-first, postcovid era*