

Open for Business

The way I write for business communication changed after spending three hours with an ex-colleague. As a recently minted MBA, I was on cloud nine after receiving praise from senior executives for my business plans for Singapore and Malaysia. However, a colleague of mine noted that the content was solid, but the writing was awful. Siew Ling said, "Book 3-hours of my time and I'll teach you how to write."

Half annoyed, mostly curious, I did that, and for three hours Siew Ling tutored me on the art of business writing, turning each of my 30-page reports into a single page. It turned out I had sat under the feet of an award-winning business journalist turned banker!

Andrew Wiggins' motivation was different from my curiosity and annoyance - he was challenged by a veteran teammate of the Golden State Warriors to up his rebounding game, and Wigs was open to the idea. Wigs was notorious for having an easy going demeanour that does little justice to his God-given athleticism. In China, NBA fans nicknamed him 'Civil Servant' because he was always content to score 18 points despite the potential for more. Even when he scored 16 points at the half he would end up with just 2 more points in the second half to total 18!

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As a result of being open to the challenge, Wigs went from averaging 4.4 career rebounds to 7.5 rebounds during the playoffs (the team played a total of 28 Playoff games this season) and even whopping figures of 16 and 13 rebounds in Game 4 & 5 of The NBA Finals! Wigs was regarded as the second best player in The Finals Series. In a recent podcast Wigs commented, 'I look back now I don't even know how (4.4 rebounds) was even possible'.

While it took a colleague and a teammate's challenges to usher me and Wigs into new possibilities, famous artist Edvard Munch's friend had to forcefully check him into a private clinic for treatment. Edvard Munch gave us the iconic piece 'The Scream', where the agonized face in the painting is now widely seen as a symbol of anxiety in modern life.

Munch had a tense relationship with his father and not only did he lived a troubled life that was overshadowed by illness and bereavement, Munch was heavily influenced by nihilism. Almost inevitably, these factors shaped 'The Scream', which represents Munch's inner turmoil. The majority of Munch's paintings are dark and pessimistic representations of his feelings. He once said, 'From the moments of my birth, the angels of anxiety, worry, and death stood at my side, followed me....'

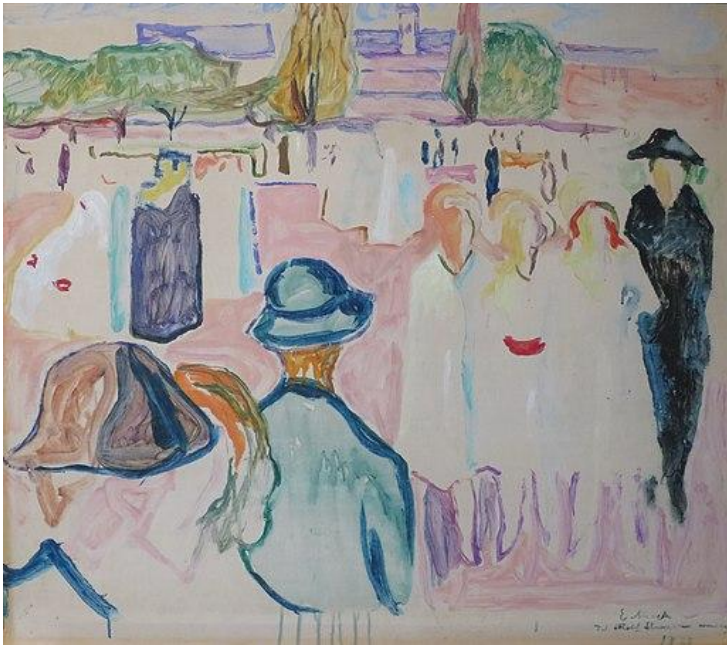
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Munch was actually open for treatment. He once sought treatment but fled during registration as he feared that he would be detained as a mentally ill patient. Munch cooperated with the doctor for nearly two years and while he was not entirely free from anxiety and melancholy, Munch's latter works (The Sun, History & Alma Mater) were full of light and 'The Bathing Man' was actually vibrant! There is a big contrast between Munch's work that was before and after treatment.

Here you can see Munch's contrasting moods in his works 'Evening on Karl Johan Street' 1892 and 'Summer on Karl Johan Street' 1933.



It is a great transformation from cheerless, dark, nihilistic pessimism to bright and cheery and it was possible because Munch was open minded.

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Openness opens the door to both professional and personal growth - trying new ways of communicating, stepping up to an uncomfortable challenge, departing from our usual models of thinking, inviting for the first time external advisors for our family business, undertaking a fresh corporate innovation endeavor, altering our behaviors or even changing our dress sense. Are you open for business? Let's chat!

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