



# PERSONAL ODYSSEY

- TO REALISE OUR FUTURE  
CREATIVE POTENTIAL - IN  
OUR ORGANISATIONS, IN  
OUR SCHOOLS AND IN OUR  
COMMUNITIES - WE NEED TO  
THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT  
OURSELVES AND TO ACT  
DIFFERENTLY TOWARDS EACH  
OTHER, WE MUST LEARN TO BE  
CREATIVE -

SIR KEN ROBINSON





IN THE 2012 REPORT, WE EXPLAINED THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE EMBRACING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN ORDER TO EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THEIR PERSONALITY AND ACHIEVE SELF-REALISATION (SEE [NEWBORN IDENTITY TREND](#)).

In the Reinvention Era, people will actively engage in exploration. They will embark on a Personal Odyssey to uncover their potential and true aspirations. In a world where there are very little guarantees about the future and where it is virtually impossible to guess where the next source of change will come from, people will take time to explore themselves and the environment around them. People will turn themselves into explorers: individuals who envision their life as a work in progress. Robert Safian referred to this group of people as Generation Flux<sup>1</sup>, because they embrace adaptability and flexibility, and are open to learn any way they can (see Additional Insights). They value the process of exploration as an important phase of their life in order to find their space, both psychological and social.

Explorers will look for opportunities to accumulate experiences that offer them multidisciplinary perspectives about themselves and about the world around them. For example, most Millennials aspire to live abroad as part of their life journey. In fact, 93% of Millennials say they expect to live and work abroad someday<sup>2</sup>. This generation is also known for “boomeranging” back to the family home as part of their exploration phase. In the US, some 39% of 25 to 34-year-olds have lived with their parents in recent years<sup>3</sup>. This phenomenon cannot be attributed to the financial crisis or rising cost of living alone. Rather, it stems from a desire to extend their Personal Odyssey and continue living without the pressure of long-term commitments.

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As the “exploratory phase” becomes a crucial period in life, we are also seeing the growth of singledom in our society (see Supporting Facts). Indeed, according to the Neo-Eriksonian “identity status paradigm” (see Additional Insights), an individual’s sense of identity is determined in large part by his or her explorations and commitments regarding certain personal and social traits. As people feel it is impossible to predict the skills and jobs of the future, they take time to explore what actually interests them and postpone the decision about the direction they want their life to take. Explorers believe that there is no wisdom without wander, and they will indulge in their Personal Odyssey thoroughly. Digital technology will make the Personal Odyssey available to all aspiring explorers. Learning by exploring will become the new motto of the Reinvention Era and the explorers will be its principal protagonists.

### **DEVELOPING AN EXPLORER MINDSET BY ENGAGING IN A PERSONAL ODYSSEY**

In some cultures the “exploratory phase” is perceived as crucial to the development of an individual from child to adult (see Additional Insights). It is through exploration, play, and wander that the individual acquires emotional and social intelligence (see Additional Insights). In the Reinvention Era, people will become increasingly interested in exposing themselves to new environments and experiencing new ways of being. People will engage in an exploratory cycle where every new experience is an opportunity to shape their identity. Unlike the specialists (see Labour of Love trend), who are focused and strategic in their approach to acquiring new skills and knowledge, the explorers indulge in wander. They believe in the benefits of being open to the unknown and they are willing to engage in activities without having a clear goal or a specific outcome in mind. As a result, we will see an increase in people taking sabbaticals and/or living abroad (see Supporting Facts) as ways to engage in a Personal Odyssey.

Explorers are risk-learners – people who believe that risks and failure are a necessary part of the Personal Odyssey. Because they do not have a clear idea of their desired outcome, failures are perceived as learning opportunities from which the explorer can acquire more wisdom. In a time when many aspects of society will be reinvented, becoming a risk-learner and being able to fail fast will be instrumental to foster an innovative mind. The exploratory cycle



will shape people's identity and help explorers cultivate their uniqueness by discovering what really interests them. Explorers will uncover their passions and their purpose in life through trials and tribulations, but also through play and fun.

Nurturing an exploratory mind can be achieved through alternative learning approaches. In Finland, for example, children begin school at 7 years of age and, once they start schooling, are encouraged to be independent. They are given opportunities to experiment and explore, and are not assigned homework or formal tests until they are 16 year old<sup>4</sup>. The entire schooling phase is envisioned as an exploratory cycle. As a result, Finland is currently ranked as the best education system in the world<sup>5</sup>. Thanks to this exploratory environment, 93% of Finns graduate from high school and 43% of Finnish high-school students go to vocational schools to pursue their passion<sup>6</sup>. Such exploratory approaches will become more popular as they prepare people to enjoy taking risks and to develop flexibility. The Institute of Play in New York City (see Case Studies) is already pioneering such new models of learning and engagement, and with great results.

In a world where already fierce competition will continue to intensify, developing a flexible, resourceful, and open mind will be a crucial advantage. Companies will value wisdom and experience over university degrees (See Additional Insights), which will make explorers highly valued assets once they are ready to focus on long-term commitments.

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**DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY WILL MAKE THE PERSONAL ODYSSEY  
ACCESSIBLE TO MOST**

Finding yourself takes time, because there are so many options available online. Technology opens the doors to experiences people would never have been able to access before. In the Reinvention Era, digital technology will



create opportunities for people to engage in a Personal Odyssey and explore until they decide on their interests and passions. Explorers will take time to engage with digital experiences that help them further their sense of identity. Many digital natives will embark on a Personal Odyssey through a virtual world, learning real-life skills in a digital environment. Tweens, for example, are spending more time in virtual worlds; the top 10 tween sites make up nearly 50% of all virtual world and MMO (massively multiplayer online gaming) traffic<sup>7</sup>. Sites such as WeeWorld.com, Webkinz, and Fantage (see Case Studies) are popular because tweens are even more emotionally invested in their virtual experiences than in the real world. They have total freedom and control over the virtual choices they make, the way they dress, whom they befriend, etc. Social and emotional intelligence can be learned online, as virtual worlds have their own social codes that are not terribly different from those of the real world. Virtual world play is an opportunity to discuss and hash out issues that can easily translate into real life.

In fact, Personal Odysseys will happen increasingly through online channels. Platforms centered around specific interests, such as Tumblr, Pinterest, or Instagram, enable people to explore different “worlds” and connect with communities of like-minded individuals. Tumblr alone reports over 70,000,000 accounts and an 85% user-retention rate, compared with Twitter’s 40%<sup>8</sup>; evidence that explorers seek engagement at a deeper level with specific communities of interests. These interest-specific sites are leading the way to an “emotional web” that engages users in emotional exploration. Innovations in emotional technology will enable people to experience the world around them in an increasingly realistic and compelling way (see Enriched Reality trend). Discovery and exploratory services (see Case Studies) will become richer and more engaging with 3D and AR (Augmented Reality). Indeed, AR browsers for Android and iPhone platforms are growing in usage, and the AR market is expected to reach \$3 billion by 2016<sup>9</sup>.

Digital technology will also turn education into a Personal Odyssey by offering creative and sometimes experimental approaches to learning. For example, Matchbook Learning (see Case Studies) creates more highly engaged and personalised experiences for teachers and, in turn, more personalised learning for each student. Explorers will be motivated to adopt technologies that allow them to access experiences as a means to explore themselves and the world around them. They will be active contributors to the Reinvention Era, applying their wisdom to discover new possibilities.

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1. <http://www.fastcompany.com/1802732/generation-flux-meet-pioneers-new-and-chaotic-frontier-business>
2. MOVE Guides, Gen Y and Global Mobility: <http://insights.moveguides.com/move-guides-announces-first-quarterly-white-paper/>
3. Pew Research <http://pewsocialtrends.org>
4. <http://www.thedailyriff.com/articles/the-finland-phenomenon-inside-the-worlds-most-surprising-school-system-588.php>
5. <http://thelearningcurve.pearson.com>
6. <http://www.businessinsider.com/finlands-education-system-best-in-world-2012-11?op=1>
7. <http://kidscreen.com/2012/12/05/making-it-to-the-top-tweens-rule-the-virtual-world-space/#ixzz2HgTcXvRq>
8. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>
9. <http://www.abiresearch.com>





## ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

**GENERATION FLUX**, a term coined by Robert Safian in FastCompany, describes a psychographic rather than a demographic. People of all ages can be described as GenFlux. Their characteristics are clear: an embrace of adaptability and flexibility, an openness to learning any way possible, and decisiveness tempered by the knowledge that business life can shift radically every three months or so.

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**BOOMERANG GENERATION** is one of several terms applied to the current generation of young adults in Western culture. They are so named for the frequency with which they choose to cohabitate with their parents after a brief period of living on their own, “boomeranging” back to their place of origin. Between 2008 and 2012, the number of young unemployed people living with their parents doubled from 218,000 to 429,000 (in the UK). Young people with

jobs are also increasingly likely to return home after university. According to research by Ann Berrington at the University of Southampton’s ESRC Centre for Population Change, young people with degrees are much more likely to live with their parents. The change is most noticeable among women; since 1998, the proportion of young women living with their parents has increased twice as quickly as the male population.

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**RUMSPRINGA** (Pennsylvania Dutch: [rum'ʃprɪŋə]; a noun derived from the Pennsylvania “Dutch” German verb rumspringen “to jump around”) generally refers to a period of adolescence for some members of the Amish, a subsect of the Anabaptist Christian movement. The rumspringa period begins around the age of 14-16 and ends when a young person chooses baptism within the Amish church or leaves the community. The vast majority chooses baptism and remains in the church. Not all Amish use this term (it does not occur in John Hostetler’s extended discussion of adolescence

among the Amish), but Amish elders that subscribe to the concept generally view rumspringa as a time for courtship and finding a spouse.

When Amish children turn 16, the rules change. They are encouraged to experiment and explore under the assumption that teens will come back to the church after tasting the modern world. For most, this means a tentative foray such as a trip to the local movie theater or driving lessons. For some, though, the experience is all about sex, parties, and fast cars.

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**THE NEO-ERIKSONIAN “IDENTITY STATUS PARADIGM”** focuses on the twin concepts of exploration and commitment. The central idea is that any individual’s sense of identity is determined in large part by the explorations and commitments that he or she makes regarding certain personal and social traits. It follows that the core of the research in this paradigm looks into the degrees to which a person has explored certain concepts, and the

degree to which he or she displays a commitment to those explorations.

James Marcia created a structural interview designed to classify adolescents into one of four identity statuses. The identity statuses are used to describe and pinpoint the progression of an adolescent's identity formation process. In James Marcia's theory, the operational definition of identity is whether an individual has explored various alternatives and made firm commitments to an occupation, religion, sexual orientation, and a set of political values.

The four identity statuses in James Marcia's theory are:

1. Identity Diffusion: When a person has not yet thought about or resolved their identity and they have not yet established a life direction.
2. Identity Foreclosure: When a person is committed to an identity, but that commitment was made without exploration as to what really suits them best.
3. Identity Moratorium: When a person is actually experiencing an identity crisis and actively searching for the answers to questions they have about life commitments.
4. Identity Achievement: When a person has solved the identity issues by making commitments to goals, beliefs, and values.

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**SIR KEN ROBINSON'S ADMONITION ABOUT SUCCESS:** We're being brought up with this idea that life is linear. This is an idea that's perpetuated when you come to write your CV- that you set out your life in a series of dates and achievements, in a linear way, as if your whole existence has progressed in an ordered, structured way, to bring you to this current interview.

[VIDEO](#)

**PLAY AS A CRUCIAL PART OF LEARNING** is an idea that is increasingly supported by scientific evidence. A review of that evidence published by the University of Georgia shows that education is not the same as disinterested drudgery; for children and adults, "play is an important mediator for learning and socialisation throughout life."

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**TIME FOR EXPLORATION** is increasingly adopted as an important part of education. New York University, Amherst College, Princeton University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yeshiva University, and Reed College have formal policies allowing students to defer admission. Harvard believes so much in the gap year that they

encourage every enrolled student to consider a year off. Princeton has a program called the "bridge year" where students spend a year performing public service abroad before beginning their freshman year. York University announced their "Bridging the Gap" program, which allows students to defer admission on the basis of a gap year.

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**GAP-YEAR TRAVEL** is a golden opportunity after A-levels according to Tom Griffiths, director of GapYear.com. "The difficult task for admissions tutors is that every applicant is so similar. So many students have three As. Now it is all about differentiating yourself, and a gap year, used correctly, can help achieve that." Griffiths asserts that there is a growing body of evidence that the students who have taken a gap year are less likely to drop out of university than those who have not. "They have had a break, they know what they want and have had a chance to realise their talent and interests."

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**EMPHASISE CURIOSITY AND OPENMINDEDNESS** through international travel. According to Stacie Nevadomski Berdan, international careers expert and co-author of *Get Ahead By Going Abroad: A Woman's*



Guide to Fast-Track Career Success (HarperCollins, 2007): “In the research I conducted for Get Ahead By Going Abroad, several traits emerged as critical to successfully working across cultures. Curiosity and openmindedness rank in the top five among professionals who have lived and worked overseas, and among companies that employ and appreciate these internationalists. Curious, openminded individuals enjoy the overseas experience for its breadth of newness and for the sheer joy of operating in an environment that is outside their comfort zone. Dealing with differences in culture as well as in infrastructure – be it while taking classes in a second language or figuring out local transportation – requires the ability to enjoy risk and the spirit of adventure. The world economy is in flux but one thing is certain: Globalisation is here to stay. Companies recognise that they need workers who not only understand international business but can also operate successfully – thrive, really – in cross-cultural situations.”

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**MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES** are energetic and creative. They are also flexible, technology-savvy, resourceful, can retrieve information quickly and efficiently, and are open-minded. Millennial employees are eager to learn and are not afraid of trying new things.

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**SABBATICALS ARE BENEFICIAL** to employee development and retention. Once considered the preserve of academics, sabbaticals are increasingly popular as a commercial employee benefit. Almost a quarter of the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For include fully paid sabbaticals on their list of perks for staff (2012).

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**COMFORT ZONE** is a behavioural state within which a person operates in an anxiety-neutral condition, using a limited set of behaviours to deliver a steady level of performance, usually without a sense of risk (White 2009). Highly successful persons may routinely step outside their comfort zones to accomplish what they wish. A comfort zone is a type of mental conditioning that causes a person to create and operate mental boundaries. Such boundaries create a sense of security. Like inertia, a person who has established a comfort zone in a particular axis of his or her life will tend to stay within that zone. To step outside a comfort zone, a person must experiment with new and different behaviours, and then experience the new and different responses that occur. Research by WhatIsMyComfortZone suggests that challenges that are commonly outside of one's comfort zone can be categorised as either professional, adrenaline, or lifestyle.

“Nobody ever died of discomfort, yet living in the name of comfort has killed more ideas, more opportunities,

more actions, and more growth than everything else combined.” T. Harv Eker

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**¿TE ATREVES A SOÑAR?, BY INKNOWATION**, is a video based on the service's goal of helping organisations and corporations transform and adapt to new and constantly changing realities. Inknowation helps leaders and their teams transform their paradigm, structures, company culture, strategies, etc.

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**GAMIFICATION**, the use of game design elements in non-game contexts, has tremendous potential for educational use by delivering truly meaningful experiences to students.

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**FOREIGN-STUDIES TREND IS BOOMING IN EUROPE** with initiatives like the Comenius Individual Pupil Mobility Scheme, a European program that allows secondary-school students to spend between three





and ten months at a host school in another country. Introduced in 2010, the Comenius exchange programme is growing in popularity. This year, more than 1,300 pupils will study abroad, bringing home not only new language skills but also a broader understanding of their European neighbours and the world they live in.

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**YOUNG FREE AGENTS HUSTLE UP MULTICAREERS:** “What do you do?” Good question. For young adults juggling multiple gigs, the answer is anything but straightforward. Dubbed “sidetrepneurism” by MTV/Viacom, wearing many different hats in the marketplace has become business as usual for multicareerist Millennials. Whether they work multiple jobs simultaneously or sequentially, freewheelin’ Millennials are building portable skill sets.”

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**THE WALKABOUT** refers to the Aboriginal Australian custom where a man breaks off from the daily grind and walks in solitude across desert and bush country on a spiritual quest. The distance covered on a walkabout may exceed 1000 miles, done without aid of compass or radio. The walker finds his way, it is believed, under the guidance of a spiritual power.

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**MOVIE TRAILER: “WALKABOUT” 1971**

**KOKORO** is a Japanese noun that in spoken language is as ubiquitous as “feel and think” in English. It is central to an immense variety of personal characteristics including will, insight, sensibility, self-control, and emotion, representing both human nature and human potential. Kokoro has been linked to psychological therapy and prophylactic practices through work, stages of life, and other matters. The word has Chinese origins meaning “heart”, and was later interpreted as “core, essential, and basic nature.” With this term we enter into the idiom of cultivation: the idea that “mind” or “spirit” can be improved, strengthened, fostered, forged, tempered, and purified. The term is often used in discussions of growth and aging, of morality and aesthetics, and of human nature in the realms of religion and philosophy.

(Thomas Rohlen, The promise of adulthood in Japanese Spiritualism, pages 129-131)

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