

Lotus Blossom

by Michael Michalko

We were all born as spontaneous, creative thinkers. Yet a great deal of our education may be regarded as the inculcation of mindsets. We were taught how to handle problems and new phenomena with fixed mental attitudes—based on what past thinkers thought—that predetermine our response to problems or situations. Typically, we think on the basis of similar problems encountered in the past. When confronted with problems, we fixate on something in our past that has worked before. Then we analytically select

...most people process the same information over and over until proven wrong, without searching for alternatives, even when there is no penalty for asking questions that give them a negative answer....Creative geniuses don't think this way. The creative genius will always look for a multiplicity of ways to approach a subject.

the most promising approach based on past experiences, excluding all other approaches, and work within a clearly defined direction toward the solution of the problem.

Once we think we know what works or can be done, it becomes hard for us to consider alternative ideas. We tend to develop narrow ideas and stick with them until proven wrong. Following is an interesting experiment, which was originally conducted by the British psychologist Peter Watson, that demonstrates the

way we typically process information. Watson would present subjects with the following three numbers in sequence.

2, 4, 6

He would then ask subjects to explain the number rule for the sequence and to give other examples of the rule. The subjects could ask as many questions as they wished without penalty.

He found that almost invariably most people will initially say, "4, 6, 8" or some similar sequence. And Watson would say, yes, that is an example of a number rule. Then they will say, "20, 22, 24" or "50, 52, 54" and so on—all numbers increasing by two. After a few tries, and getting affirmative answers each time, they are confident that the rule is numbers increasing by two without exploring alternative possibilities.

Actually, the rule Watson was looking for is much simpler—it's simply numbers increasing. They could be 1, 2, 3 or 10, 20, 40 or 400, 678, 10,944. And testing such an alternative would be easy. All the subjects had to say was 1, 2, 3 to Watson to test it and it would be affirmed. Or, for example, a subject could throw out any series of numbers, for example, 5,4,3 to see if they got a positive or negative answer. And that information would tell them a lot about whether their guess about the rule is true.

The profound discovery Watson made was that most people process the same information

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President's Column

by Tara G. Coste

Leadership and Organizational Studies
University of Southern Maine

A Bright Future Ahead

As I sit down to write my last presidential column, I find myself somewhat at a loss for words—a rare occasion, I can assure you. I intended to write a celebratory summary of what has happened in the world of ACA over the last three years, but there have been so many exciting events, so many interesting developments, that it is extremely hard to isolate what is most important. As I reflect upon this time, a kaleidoscope of people and places keeps flashing through my mind. However, three areas of endeavor and their champions keep coming to mind...

Our work with the next generation of creativity experts has been simply amazing. The students and faculty we meet are exploring a fascinating array of elements with which we can advance our knowledge of the creative process. In particular, I would like to recognize the efforts of Dr. Mary Murdock and the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College, Dr. Fredricka Reisman and the Torrance Center for Creativity at Drexel University, and Dr. Joyce Juntune and the Institute for Applied Creativity at Texas A&M University. If these individuals are any indication, the field of creativity has a bright future indeed.

Our efforts to develop ongoing regional creative communities have been a great success. We now have a number of regional chapters and international affiliates providing exciting programming on a wide range of topics throughout the year. For this, special thanks is due to Bud Wurtz who has tirelessly spearheaded this work from the start. These regional events and our annual international meeting—as it moves to varying locations across the country—are essential to continuing a robust exchange of the latest ideas and practices in the field.

Our international outreach has been met with enthusiastic response from around the world. On an increasingly complex global stage, the deliberate enhancement of creative problem solving has never been more critical. My sincere appreciation for the work of Dr. Alan Black who has traveled the planet a number of times, meeting people, learning about their interests, and making connections between them. In cooperation with a number of organizations spanning the globe, we are now well on the way to having systematic worldwide interchange of the best practices in creativity and innovation.

My heartfelt thanks to all of you who work so hard for ACA and the field of creativity.

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Panel Highlighting Creative Leadership Shines in Philadelphia

by Lynne Krause
ACA Executive Director

One of the ways to create more momentum in forming our local ACA chapter is bringing together people with an interest in using creativity to move our society toward something better. With the gracious help and support of the School of Education at Drexel University, the Philadelphia region of ACA was able to present an exciting evening of ideas and dialogue on creative leadership in legislation, education, military and business.

Creative people stand out from the crowd and our panelists epitomized the essence of creative leadership. These are people who not only believe in creative leadership but act on it as well in their positions as legislators, businessmen, and military commanders. The panel discussion was introduced by Dr. William Lynch, Director of the University's School of Education and moderated by Dr. Fredricka Reisman, herself an ACA Board member. Dr. Reisman was founder of the School of Education and is Director of Drexel-Torrance Center for Creative Studies.

Dwight Evans, a democratic representative from the Pennsylvania Legislature, focuses his legislative energy on his two passions; improving public education and rebuilding communities. Evans championed the state's charter school law and is an active volunteer of the West Oak Lane Charter School. He talked about the need to rethink education and provide options for people's choice. Evans' vision is about alignment of education with the marketplace. He pointed out the direct connection between achievement in school and earning capability. "When people have livable wages it impacts people to make decisions to stay in their communities." He was at once inspiring, engaging and informative when discussing working the enigmatic political process.

Jeff Westphal is CEO of Vertex, Inc., a software solution company. Vertex was honored in 2001 as the best place to work in Pennsylvania. Vertex was also recognized that year as Best Employer for Working Parents. Under Mr. Westphal's creative leadership, Vertex continues to retain its work force and sustain its employee benefits in an economy that has seen many businesses downsize and reduce benefits. Westphal's philosophy is simple; create an environment for people to have a conversation around the best place to go, don't tell employees and honestly ask for ideas. It was easy to see why Westphal's company maintains the extremely low turnover rate of 3.4%. Inspiration and vision abound from this creative leader as he

states "connect with people and possibilities, imagine the impossible...involvement is encouraging people's dreams."

Michael Rouse is the executive director and co-founder of Education, Sports & Fun (ESF) Summer Camps. In addition to his college education, Mr. Rouse played professional tennis and is a graduate of the Disney Institute's People Management, Customer Service and Creative Leadership Programs. Rouse spoke on the great need we have for creative leaders. He spoke about areas in which he felt creative leaders excelled; having a generous nature toward each other, knowing yourself—both strengths and weaknesses, having situational awareness, being approachable and being able to feed off one another.

Retired Lieutenant General Martin Steele was our fourth panelist. Before leaving active duty he served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policies, and Operations, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. General Steele recently retired as president and CEO of the Intrepid Sea-Air Space Museum. Steele talked about the four roles of a creative leader (teacher, coach, mentor & role model), citing the Marine Corps as building that foundation for him. He emphasized the fact that we need to create creative leaders by providing inspiration and education to change behavior. We do this by the understanding of character, having integrity and through personal example. Steele cited some important values; establish conditions for creative environments, overcome the achievement gap, bond through bringing us together, seize off each other's strengths and then attack each other's weaknesses, seize today, bloom where you are planted and subordinate yourself to the task at hand. His thoughts and interaction with the other panelists were deeply engaging.

The discussion that followed after the panelist's brief remarks was thought provoking and full of insights. Thanks to Drexel University we were able to have the program in the Paul Peck Alumni Building, once an old city bank and currently housing an impressive art collection. It was an evening of creative thoughts and sights as well.

"... create creative leaders by providing inspiration and education to change behavior.

We do this by the understanding of character, having integrity and through personal example."

Lieutenant General Martin Steele

over and over until proven wrong, without searching for alternatives, even when there is no penalty for asking questions that give them a negative answer. In his hundreds of experiments, he, incredibly, never had an instance in which someone spontaneously offered an alternative hypothesis to find out if it were true. In short, his subjects didn't even try to find out if there is a simpler or even, another, rule.

Creative geniuses don't think this way. The creative genius will always look for a multiplicity of ways to approach a subject. It is this willingness to entertain different perspectives and alternative approaches that broadens their thinking and opens them up to new information and the new possibilities that the rest of us don't see. Einstein was once asked what the difference was between him and the average person. He said that if you asked the average person to find a needle in a haystack, the person would stop when he or she found a needle. He, on the other hand, would tear through the entire haystack looking for all possible needles.

When Charles Darwin first set to solve the problem of evolution, he did not analytically settle on the most promising approach to natural selection and then process the information in a way that would exclude all other approaches. Instead, he initially organized his thinking around significant themes, principally eight, of the problem, which gave his thinking some order but with the themes connected loosely enough so that he could easily alter them singly or in groups. His themes helped him capture his thoughts about evolutionary change by allowing him to reach out in many alternative directions at once and pulling seemingly unrelated information into a coalescent body of thought.

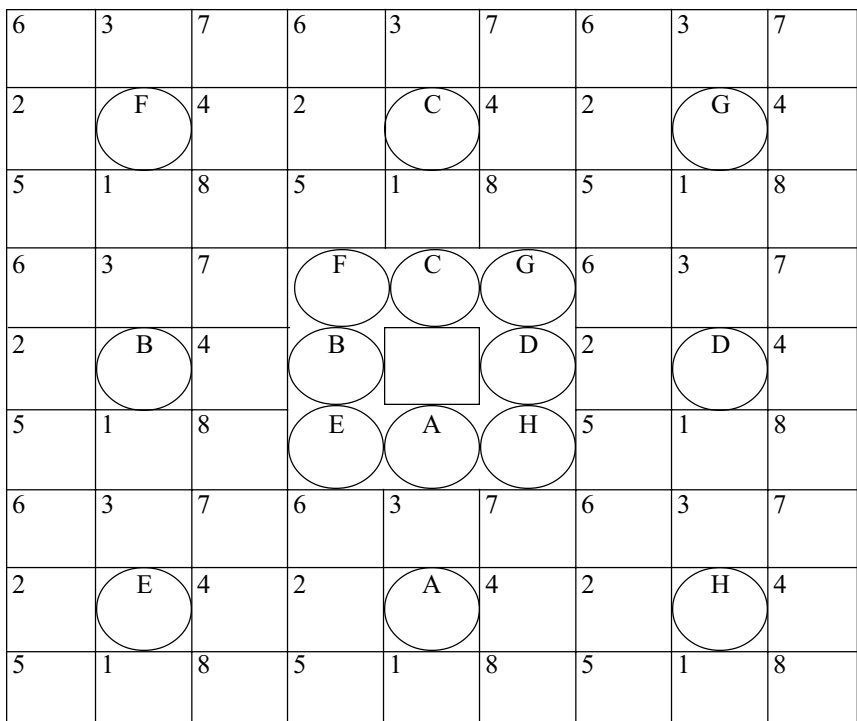
Darwin used his themes to work through many points that led to his theory of evolution by helping him to comprehend what is known and to guide in the search for what is not yet known. He used them as a way of classifying the relation of different species to each other, as a way to represent the accident of life, the irregularity of nature, the explosiveness of growth, and of the necessity to keep the number of species constant. Over time, he rejected some of his themes—the idea of direct adaptation, for instance. Some were empha-

sized—the idea of continuity. Some were confirmed for the first time—the idea that change is continuous. Some were recognized—the frequency of variation. By adjusting and altering the number of themes and connections, Darwin was able to keep his thought fluid and to bring about adaptive shifts in his thinking. He played the critic, surveying his own positions; the inventor, devising new solutions and ideas; and the learner, accumulating new facts not prominent before.

The point is that by organizing his thinking around loosely-connected themes, Darwin expanded his thinking by inventing alternative possibilities and explanations that, otherwise, may have been ignored. A creative-thinking technique that will help you expand your thinking in a similar fashion is Lotus Blossom, which was originally developed by Yasuo Matsumura of Clover Management Research in Chiba City, Japan. The technique helps you to diagrammatically mimic Darwin's thinking strategy by organizing your thinking around significant themes. You start with a central subject and expand into themes and sub-themes, each with separate entry points. In Lotus Blossom, the petals around the core of the blossom are figuratively "peeled back" one at a time, revealing a key component or theme. This approach is pursued in ever-widening circles until the subject or opportunity is comprehensively explored. The cluster of themes and surrounding ideas and applications, which are developed in one way or another, provide several different alternative possibilities.

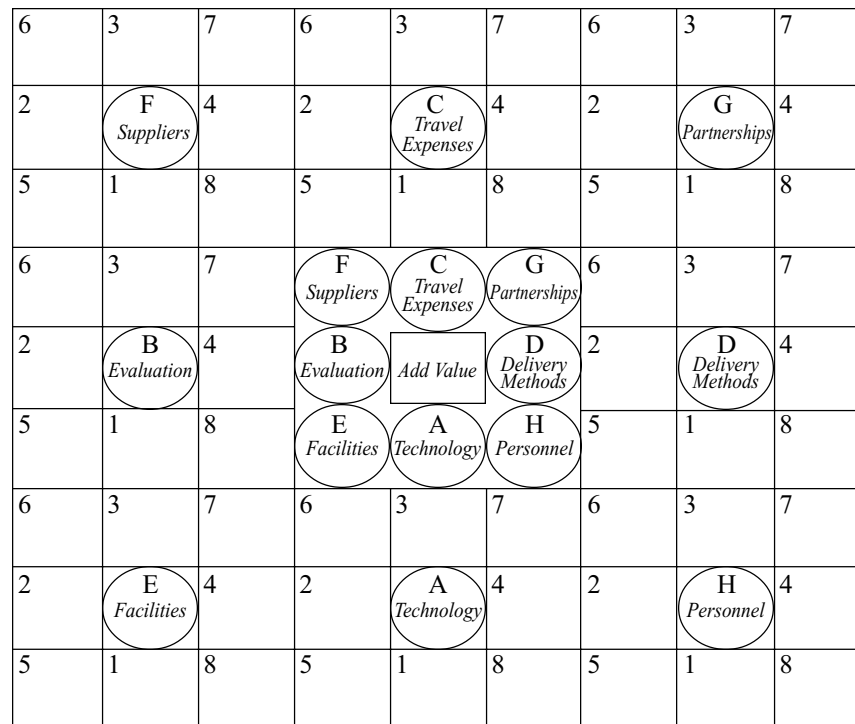
The guidelines for Lotus Blossom are:

1. Write the central problem in the center of the diagram.
2. Write the significant themes, components or dimensions of your subject in the surrounding circles labeled A to H surrounding the central theme. The optimal number of themes for a manageable diagram is between six and eight. If you have more than eight, make additional diagrams. Ask questions like: What are my specific objectives? What are the constants in my problem? If my subject were a book, what would the chapter headings be? What are the dimensions of my problem?
3. Use the ideas written in the circles as the central themes for the surrounding lotus blossom petals or boxes. Thus, the idea or application you wrote in circle A would become the central theme for the lower middle box A. It now becomes the basis for generating eight new ideas or applications.
4. Continue the process until the lotus blossom diagram is completed.



Suppose, for example, you want to create more value for your organization by increasing productivity or decreasing costs. You would write “Add Value” in the center box. Next, write the eight most significant areas in your organization where you can increase productivity or decrease costs in the circles labeled A to H that surround your central box. Also write the same significant areas in the circles with the corresponding letters spread around the diagram. In my example, I selected the themes “suppliers,” “travel expenses,” “partnerships,” “delivery methods,” “personnel,” “technology,” “facilities,” and “evaluation.” For instance, in the sample diagram the word “technology” in the circle labeled A, serves as the theme for the lower middle group of boxes. Each area now represents a theme that ties together the surrounding boxes.

For each theme, try to think of eight ways to add value. Phrase each theme as a question to yourself. For example, ask, “In what ways might we use technology to increase productivity?” and “In what ways might we use technology to decrease expenses?” Write the ideas and applications in the boxes numbered 1 through 8 surrounding the technology theme. Do this for each theme. Think of eight ideas or ways to make personnel more productive or ways to decrease personnel expenses, eight ideas or ways to create more value for your delivery methods, your facilities and so on. If you complete the entire diagram, you’ll have 64 new ideas or ways to increase productivity or decrease expenses.



When you write your ideas in the diagram, you’ll discover that ideas continually evolve into other ideas and applications, as ideas seem to flow outward with a conceptual momentum all their own.

An important aspect of this technique is that it shifts you from reacting to a “static” snapshot of the problem and will encourage you to examine the significant themes of the problem and the relationships and connections between them. Sometimes when you complete a diagram with ideas and applications for each theme, a property or feature not previously seen will emerge. Generally, higher level properties are regarded as emergent—a car, for example, is an emergent property of the interconnected parts. If a car were disassembled and all the parts were thrown into a heap, the property disappears. If you placed the parts in piles according to function, you begin to see a pattern and make connections between the piles that may inspire you to imagine the emergent property—the car, which you can then build. Similarly, when you diagram your problem thematically with ideas and applications, it enhances your opportunity to see patterns and make connections. The connections you make between the themes and ideas and applications will sometimes create an emergent new property or feature not previously considered.

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Brainteasers May Help Researchers Determine What Spurs Creativity

by Sharon Begley

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Wall Street Journal reported on a scientific study aimed at finding an answer to the age-old question: "From Whence Creativity?"

The volunteers looked like electronic Medusas, with wires snaking from 30 electrodes glued to their scalps and recording their brain activity.

As they peered at a computer screen, a brainteaser flashed: Turn the incorrect Roman-numeral equation $XI + I = X$, made out of 10 sticks, into a correct one by moving as few sticks as possible. As soon as the volunteers figured it out, they hit a key, and another puzzle appeared. None could be solved by a plug-and-chug approach; all required insight and creativity.

Since creativity emanates from the mind, and the mind is the child of the brain, you'd think neuroscientists would be drawing a bead on the source and character of this highly prized mental skill. But progress has been slow, in part because neuroscientists' pet technique—brain-imaging—can't track real-life creative processes such as thinking up "Guernica" or proving Fermat's last theorem. So rather than concede defeat as Sigmund Freud did (referring to Dostoevsky, he wrote, "Before the problem of the creative artist, analysis must, alas, lay down its arms"), researchers are using proxies of true insight and creativity, such as brainteasers.

Solving problems such as the Roman-numeral puzzle requires you to resist conventional assumptions and approaches, examine a problem from a different perspective, and detect novel connections among disparate elements...or so scientists believe.

The resulting out-of-the-blue insight is known as a "eureka" moment, which is what Archimedes yelled when he leapt out of his bathtub upon figuring out how to calculate the volume of an irregularly shaped object.

Some people try to solve the Roman-numeral problem with a plodding, uncreative solution, and wind up moving one of the sticks that make up $XI + I = X$ to get $X + I = XI$. But the minimum number of sticks you need to move is not one. It's zero. Turn the paper upside down (or do so mentally) and $XI + I = X$ becomes the accurate $X = I + IX$ without moving a single stick. The brain waves generated by the two approaches are strikingly different, says Bhavin Sheth of the University of Houston.

In volunteers who found the creative, zero-stick solution, there was an abrupt decrease in low-frequency brain waves known as delta and gamma activity just before the eureka moment. Delta waves characterize such mental processes as memory; gamma waves are associated with coordinated mental activity. Both seem to be signatures of focused, but

perhaps conventional, mental activity. The fact that both disappeared right before the volunteers hit upon a creative solution suggests that the brain was escaping from conventional thought patterns.

"Insight and creativity begin when you break out of the thinking rut you're in and restructure the problem in a new way," says Prof. Sheth.

Right before a eureka moment, but not before a pedestrian solution, there was also an increase in theta waves in the front of the brain. "Theta waves are thought to play a role in encoding new information, so our interpretation is that this marks the formation of new associations between previously unconnected concepts," says Prof. Sheth. "The information in the problem is seen in a new light, so people rotate the sticks in the Roman-numeral equation—a spatial solution to what seemed like a numerical problem. This is the essence of creative thinking."

A critical part of insightful solutions, but not of plodding ones, is that they require you to bring together distant associations, as the Cubists did when they realized faces could be constructed from boxy angles. One brain region seems particularly important for that. Called the anterior superior temporal gyrus of the right hemisphere, and known to its friends as the aSTG, it sits just above the right ear.

This area "seems to draw together distantly related information," says psychologist Mark Jung-Beeman of Northwestern University. "We think it lets people see connections that had eluded them."

In a study published this year in PLoS Biology, he and colleagues asked volunteers to find a word that can form a compound with three others, such as "sauce," "pine" and "crab." Some people solved the problem noncreatively, thinking of everything that goes with "crab" and then trying them all on "pine," for instance. For others, the solution came through pure insight; they stared at the

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Finding the Creative Spark

by Faye Flam

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Where do insights come from?

Studies of the brain show the location—and hint at ways to encourage perception.

“Maybe if we understood how insights occur we could make them more probable”—even structure educational materials to encourage insightful thoughts in students, Kounios said.

What happened in Ben Franklin’s brain when he first thought of bifocals and the public library? Which of Wilbur Wright’s neurons fired when the frustrated flight pioneer suddenly realized how to shift wing angles to bring the world controlled flight?

Insightful thoughts, original ideas, American ingenuity—the engines of progress in science and technology, arts and culture. And yet we don’t fully understand their nature, nor have we figured out how to summon them at will from whatever uncharted region of the unconscious mind they are born.

But now, science is starting to give us insight into insight. Psychology professor John Kounios of Drexel University and Mark Jung-Beeman of Northwestern University are attempting to capture the seat of insight using an electroencephalogram (EEG) and brain scanning machine. When they asked subjects to solve certain types of word puzzles while hooked to these devices, they found some surprising patterns of brain activity surrounding the moments the right answers popped into the subjects’ minds. “Maybe if we understood how insights occur we could make them more probable”—even structure educational materials to encourage insightful thoughts in students, Kounios said.

Psychologists have been puzzling over insight for hundreds of years, said Kounios. The term *insight* sometimes refers to wisdom but the phenomenon Kounios is chasing is more akin to wit—sudden connections made in the brain that allow people to solve problems.

To attempt to capture that type of insight, Kounios used a type of puzzle that involved lists of three words, all related to a fourth word. For example, he would present a research subject with the words measure/worm/video (answer *tape*); hound/pressure/shot; or home/sea/bed. In all cases, a single word can turn each of the three into a commonplace compound word or phrase (see answers below if your insight center isn’t helping you with the second two).

The subjects were asked whether they felt the answers had “just popped into their heads,” indicating they had an insight, or whether they used a more methodical approach, say, looking at the words in pairs.

While all this was going on, the subjects were hooked up to EEG and fMRI machines to concurrently monitor what was happening in their brains.

Some researchers said they were intrigued with the experiments. Jonathan Schooler, a psychologist at the University of Pittsburgh, said he found it telling that Kounios saw differences in the brain scans when subjects reported having an insight or an “aha” moment. “That suggests there is something unique that doesn’t happen with ordinary problem solving,” he said.

Work like that in Kounios’ lab “helps to demystify creativity by connecting it to a discrete neuronal process,” said Christoff Koch, a neuroscientist at the California Institute of Technology. “People tend to get all misty-eyed about it,” he said.

Studying insight may help scientists in their current push to understand consciousness as well, Koch said. Insight, creativity and other cherished abilities appear to come from the unconscious mind and then burst into consciousness. “We’re only conscious of a small fraction of what’s in our heads.”

The answers: “blood” and “sick.”

Brainteasers...continued

words until “apple” popped into their head. (Too easy? Try “bump,” “step” and “egg.”) There was a spike in activity in the right hemisphere’s aSTG just before the eureka moment (“goose!”), suggesting the brain was bringing together far-flung concepts.

Also active in some cases of sudden insight was a region near the anterior cingulate. The AC reorients attention, perhaps directing the brain away from dead ends and onto creative

paths, says psychologist John Kounios of Drexel University in Philadelphia. “It also seems to be involved in suppressing some thoughts—in this case, maybe those that characterize the mental rut that keeps you from the insightful solution,” he says.

The genius of a Dostoevsky may always elude science, but lowlier versions of creativity could well be within its grasp.

ACA mission

The American Creativity Association (ACA) is the national organization of professionals in the field of creativity. Through its programs and services, it offers individuals and organizations opportunities for learning, professional development and networking. It is dedicated to enhancing the use of creativity throughout our society for the betterment of the human condition.

ACA vision

ACA is the virtual academy that leaders and professionals in the field of creativity turn to as the primary source of ideas and information dealing with creativity and where initiates to the field can begin their journey of discovery. To achieve its vision, the ACA provides: 1) forums to present, test and exchange ideas; 2) opportunities for networking and fellowship; 3) clearing-house services for information on the state of the art in creativity research and practice; and 4) means to link theorists and practitioners.

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Create or Die

by Harvey Mathason
TBD Enterprises
Bensalem, Pennsylvania

Business people want to know what creativity can do for their business.

The relevant question is how can their businesses survive without creativity.

The very word creativity drives a shudder right down the business person's spine—the big "C" word, fluff, a child's fantasy. Don't even use it in the title of a seminar.

Even though you build it, no one will come!

Creativity has been studied intensively for 50 years. There are over a million books on it, websites, associations such as the American Creativity Association and in-depth studies on it such as the study of "insight" going on at Drexel University. Isn't anyone curious about how they can use what is being discovered?

When a business first starts, creative energy starts it. Creative energy is needed for renewal and sustenance.

Everyone is creative and even people that are very creative can learn to be more creative; however, being creative is not a simple formula. It's hard work.

There are guidelines to follow such as:

1. Being childlike—including having fun, being curious, and taking risks
2. Vision—including imaging
3. Belief—reinforcing the belief that you are creative
4. Lifelong learning—including recording your ideas
5. Diversity of ideas and people
6. Incubation—including meditation
7. Synthesis—including observing the resemblance of things that differ and the difference of things that are alike

Creativity generally includes a love of something, a passion, a desire. It requires an openness and willingness to see things in a different way. How can you be creative if you don't continually learn and expose yourself to diverse ideas and people. Synthesis, a vital part of creativity, requires practice—practice connecting ideas or features of objects.

Creativity is like riding a bicycle—to learn it you need to do it. And when you do it, you need not get lost into the ocean of what has been created. Rather focus on what you would like to create. I will not get into the so-called concrete examples here because what you require depends on your individual needs and your unique business. I will give you one idea developed by the motivational speaker, Earl Nightengale. Once a week with a yellow tablet or computer, review and write down ideas about your business. If you wish to further explore creativity, look at the website www.mycoted.com. It has over 200 creativity techniques.

Finally, the way to approach creativity is one principle, one technique at a time.