

What **is** creativity?

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What is Creativity?

written and illustrated by

Shelli Walsh

Shelli Walsh is a creative consultant for digital marketing under the brand name ShellShock. Shelli has 18 years professional creative, marketing and business experience and uses this expertise to help brands spread their message online through creative content strategies.

Shelli is driven by the distribution of information and the empowerment that knowledge brings; considering the invention of the printing press and the internet as the two most important events in the evolution of mankind. She was attracted to work within digital marketing as she wanted to understand how you could broadcast a message and be found online.

Specialist areas: Content marketing strategies, ebook research and production, online branding, creative web pages and creative services for digital agencies.

Contact Shelli here:

shellshockuk.com/contact

twitter.com/shelliwalsh

linkedin.com/shelliwalsh

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***“Think left and think right
and think low and think high.
Oh, the thinks you can think
up if only you try.”***

Dr. Seuss



Introduction

Be more creative is a phrase often used within business and marketing with little consideration given to its meaning. SEO and online marketing have seen seismic shifts over the last few years and being creative is now an essential ingredient to online marketing success. But what does it *mean* to be creative?

The OED definition for creative states: *relating to or involving imagination or original ideas*.

What others have said about creativity:

“Creativity is the process of having original ideas that have value.”
[Sir Ken Robinson](#)

“Creativity is not a talent, it’s a way of operating.” **John Cleese**

“Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while.” **Steve Jobs**

Creativity from a scientific perspective:

“We think what we see is a relaxation of ‘executive functions’ to allow more natural de-focused attention and uncensored processes to occur that might be the hallmark of creativity.” [Allen Braun, Neuroscientist](#)

My definition of creativity is:

Creativity is being exposed to diverse influences and recreating your own unique interpretation of existing ideas.

Consider ‘creativity’ in the everyday world:

Ferran Adrià's cooking, Richard Branson's publicity stunts, James Dyson's unique bagless vacuum cleaners. Traffic flow systems, the internet, computers, light bulbs, even the sandwich (invented so the Earl of Sandwich could eat and play cards at the same time) – all came from creative inspiration.

Creativity is all around us in every aspect of our lives, from the clothes we wear in the morning to the appliances we make our breakfast with, from the car we drive to work to the building we work in. Even the most mundane objects such as a ballpoint biro (one of my favourite creative ideas), or a road sign are creative ideas.

Some cultures believe creativity to be a capricious spirit, reliant upon the whims of divine intervention. In reality, creativity owes more to sheer hard work and tenacity; working through many iterations before the solution is reached.

Most people believe that creativity means painting a picture or performing a song – but that is a skill-based understanding – process, not substance. There is much confusion around the difference between style and creativity. A lot of designers are ‘stylists’: they make things look good. Creativity is about concepts, ideas and innovation.

“There are many people calling themselves creative who are actually mere stylists.” **Edward de Bono**

Considered to be exclusive to artists and designers, creativity is in fact a skill we can all access. Everyone has the capacity to generate ideas. Admittedly, some people are more inclined towards creative thinking, just as some are able to figure large maths calculations in their head or swim like Michael Phelps. But anyone can increase his or her level of creativity.

Introduction

I have experience trying out many ways of making a living by being creative: printing photographs onto pieces of wood and getting up at 5 a.m. to sell them at Spitalfields Art Market, hand silk screen printing cushions and scarves and selling them at Chelsea Craft Fair; publishing my own range of cards and selling them internationally at the NEC Spring Fair and Top Drawer in London; editing magazines, building websites, designing brochures, being a shadow artist for a well known 'cute' character – the list goes on. I have hustled, learnt on my feet and jumped on trends to keep being creative and survive.

Even after 17 years experience, I still keep studying and working at it every single day. Learning is one of my biggest passions in life and I think we should remain open to change and keep learning right until we expire.

Always be curious...

1. Learning

“The creative person wants to be a know it all, He wants to know about all kinds of things. He never knows when these ideas might come together to form a new idea. It may happen six minutes later or in six years but the creative person has faith it will happen”

Carl Ally



Learning

Learn how to think – the right way

Creativity is perceived to be something external and out of our control or an inherent talent for a chosen few – but thinking and idea-generation are skills that can be learned. Some people do have a greater aptitude for thinking creatively and laterally, just as some people are more logic-based but it is a misconception that creativity is an exclusive right of a select group. John Cleese, in his experience, believes that creativity is not an ability you have or have not. [Research by Donald W MacKinnon](#) has also shown that IQ is not relevant to creativity.

I struggled for years to swim front crawl as I couldn't breath properly and would usually end up choking half-way through a length. I had one swimming lesson which taught me how to turn my head the right way at the right time and now I can swim two miles crawl, non-stop, in 1:10. Until you have learnt the fundamentals and know how to do something the *right* way, it's very difficult to do it to your best ability. I believe that the lack of support for teaching creative and lateral thinking in schools and the way in which our education puts value on academia and not creative subjects contributes to the attitude of *'I am just not a creative person.'*

Understanding how to think will drastically improve your creativity.

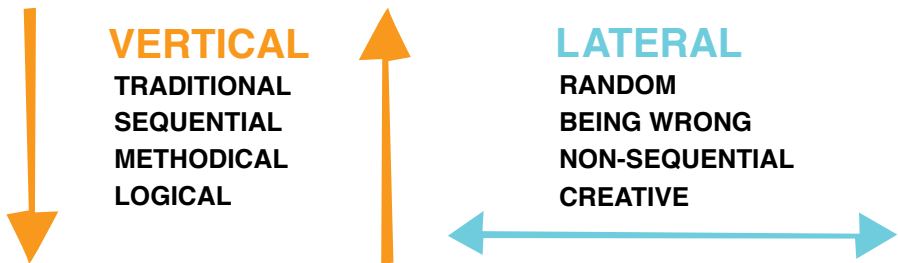
I can't recommend enough the book [Lateral Thinking by Edward de Bono](#), which teaches thinking skills in very easy exercises. Changing your point of entry when approaching a problem, suspending judgement and how to effectively brainstorm are just a few of the skills that you can learn quickly to radically change your approach to problem solving, thinking and finding creative solutions. (Too deep a subject to tackle here, so I will be tackling this subject in a dedicated book.)

Vertical thinking

The traditional type of thinking is *vertical thinking*. Sequential and logic-based vertical thinking moves through a set process and stops when the best solution for a problem is found. Most thinking is done this way – we are taught to think vertically.

Lateral thinking

Lateral thinking is about removing preconception and being prepared to work with ideas that at first appear wrong and jumping randomly between thoughts in a non-sequential manner. Taking such a seemingly chaotic approach to thinking enables you to set aside any ingrained beliefs that may influence your thinking subconsciously. Thinking is then open to breakthroughs of radical new solutions. Ideas can be conceived in a way that simply isn't possible with vertical thinking.



“In vertical thinking, one moves forward by sequential steps each of which must be justified...In lateral thinking, one uses information not for its own sake but for its effect. In lateral thinking, one may have to be wrong at some stage in order to achieve the correct solution.”

Edward de Bono, *Lateral Thinking*

Vertical Thinking	Lateral Thinking
Logical	Creative
Methodical	Changing patterns
Selective and exclusive of ideas	Non-selective and open to all ideas
Focuses on one promising solution	Generates as many alternative approaches as possible
Will stop when a promising solution is reached	Carries on looking for solutions after a promising solution is found
Trying to select the best solution	Generating many different solutions
Is sequential and moves forward one step at a time	Can make jumps

“With vertical thinking, one uses information for its own sake in order to move forward to a solution.

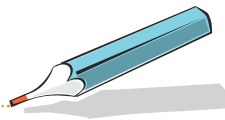
“With vertical thinking, one uses information for its own sake in order to move forward to a solution. With lateral thinking, one uses information not for its own sake but provocatively in order to bring about repatterning.”

Edward De Bono, *Lateral Thinking*

Vertical and lateral thinking are co-dependent

Vertical and lateral thinking are both essential for different tasks and work hand-in-hand. Whilst *lateral thinking* can conceive of radical new creative ideas, *vertical thinking* can then implement those new ideas in functional ways. Learning to think laterally will improve your overall thinking and creative skills by expanding your brain's capacity to look for new solutions.

Creative Tip:



Three techniques for lateral thinking are:

Using an analogy: To avoid being trapped by the obvious when looking for creative ideas and solutions, use an analogy to shift your thinking. For example, imagine wanting a solution to find car keys – consider being lost in fog, a vision impaired person finding their way around, a stranger in a foreign location. By using an analogy you will see the problem in a different way and approach it with fresh solutions.

Reverse information and reject the obvious: To break the natural pattern of order. For example, in online marketing your aim is to direct traffic to a website. Reverse and consider: how do you take the website to the traffic? Or reject the obvious and the brain is forced to consider other alternatives. For example, when considering how to increase the online visibility of a website, imagine that search engines don't exist.

Opposing elements: Another pattern breaker is to take two random and opposing items and connect them (a classic technique for humour). For example, a fish riding a bicycle, a ballet-dancing hippo, a toad that sings opera. Brainstorm and create a mind map of keywords associated to your theme, as this can throw up lots of possibilities for potential connection that suggest creative ideas.

2. Curiosity



Curiosity about life in all of its aspects, I think, is still the secret of great creative people” Leo Burnett

Curiosità - Be insatiably curious and forever asking questions.

Curiosity

Two of my favourite things in the world to do are swimming and reading. My Sundays are precious and I look forward to an early morning *big* swim and then reading and relaxing for the rest of the day to help recharge my batteries for the week. I read widely and passionately: blogs, websites, newspapers, magazines, books and newsletters.

Read widely and get to the source

One thing I have learnt through experience is to read widely offline and listen to as many thought leaders speak as possible. I live for the internet – it runs my life – but I have noticed that the more I read books, the more I get to the source of original ideas. The more I am exposed to culture in the real world (exhibitions, conferences), the more my creativity is stimulated. We know better than anyone that the internet is full of duplicate content, but it is also full of amazing ideas and people with something to say. The difficulty is finding them amongst all the noise. It is easier to get to the real meat when you get offline. And then you have more chance of being original online.

Nothing compares to hearing thought leaders and experts speak live. You get direct access and insight into brilliant minds, get to hear things you may never read anywhere else and are at the forefront of development and research. As we all have experience from SEO conferences, the best tips are the ones we hear while listening to thought leader panel discussions: cutting edge tips and techniques in a fast moving industry. Conferences are one of my favourite sources of inspiration.

Feed the creative machine

I remember reading the definition of an art director as *'someone who has to have extensive knowledge from a diverse range of subjects to feed their creativity'*. I cannot advocate enough for the

benefits of exposure to as much cultural input as possible. This will really improve your thinking. After all: *'all ideas are second hand,'* (see below). So you need to keep feeding your machine so it has ingredients to process.

"The creative person wants to be a know it all, he wants to know about all kinds of things. He never knows when these ideas might come together to form a new idea. It may happen six minutes later or in six years, but the creative person has faith it will happen." **Carl Ally, NYC advertiser.**

Think beyond the search box

I grew up pre-Google in the days when, if you had a question, you had to go to a library and look the answer up in a book – you couldn't just type in a question and have thousands of answers delivered instantly like you can now. When I wrote my dissertation in 1995, I spent most of my days in London visiting libraries and talking to people who could help me. It took months. If I wrote my dissertation today (subject: Deconstruction fashion and philosophy) then it would probably take me a few days research via Google. But the very fact that I have these offline skills of looking for solutions and answers in the 'old fashioned way' means that I can now think beyond the search box. I can find answers anywhere and have excellent research skills because of it. Which, in turn, provides me with the inspiration and information to access when I want to think of a creative solution.

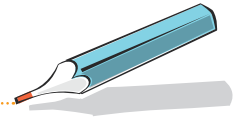
"Curiosity about life in all of its aspects, I think, is still the secret of great creative people." **Leo Burnett**

Always be curious and asking questions

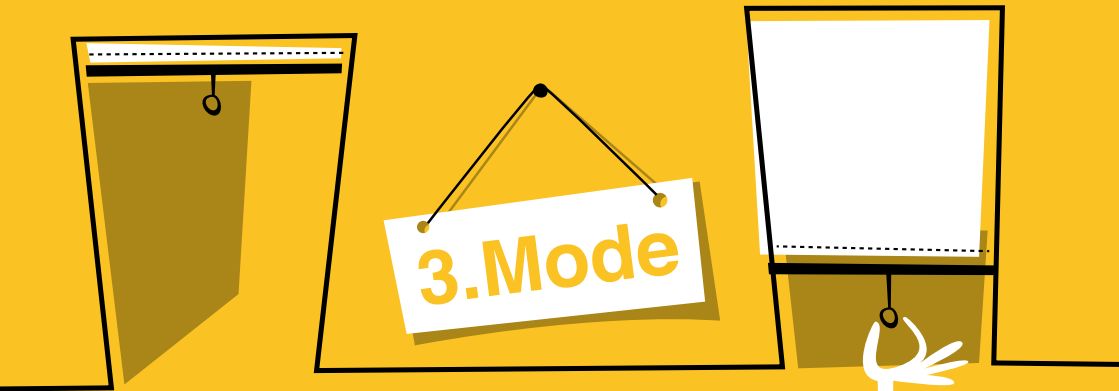
This was one of the seven principles that Leonardo Da Vinci lived by and to which he attributed his great creative output. I think these maxims perfectly illustrate my own beliefs and are reflections of how I approach creativity:

Curiosità:	be insatiably curious and forever asking questions
Dimostrazione:	knowledge through experience and learning through mistakes
Sensazione:	refinement of the sense to enliven experience
Sfumato:	ambiguity, paradox and uncertainty
Arte/scienza:	the balance between the logical and the imagination
Corporalità:	maintaining a fit and healthy body as a vehicle for the brain
Connessione:	the connection of all things and interdependence

Creative Tip:



Read widely and as often as you can. Make frequent visits to places that stimulate your interest and curiosity: museums, galleries, even retro junk shops or markets. Absorbing new information will start to fire your synapses and stimulate your thinking and ideas. Remember to keep notes. And get to as many industry conferences as possible to hear cutting edge information. Investment in your own learning is the best way to increase your success in life.



When we are under pressure and stress to deliver we are in ***closed*** mode. When we are relaxed and 'playful' we are in the ***open*** mode.

Mode

John Cleese understands and defines the creative process as learning to switch between two states or modes: *open* and *closed*. When we are under pressure and stress to deliver, such as in our everyday working lives, we are in *closed* mode. When we are relaxed, detached from problems and playful, we are in *open* mode. *Open* can be considered 'playful' (lateral thinking) and *closed* 'logical' (vertical thinking). Just as we need both *lateral thinking* and *vertical thinking*, we need open and closed states to solve a problem: the open state allows us to develop creative ideas and then the closed state to plan and implement the idea. These are similarly aligned to vertical and lateral thinking processes.

How do we achieve open mode and what can scientific research tell us about finding the optimum mental state for being creative?

Measuring and quantifying creativity has always been a difficult task because it is so subjective. Breakthrough research in this field is largely attributed to [Donald W MacKinnon](#) who is recognised as a pioneer within creative research. I would recommend this paper for further in-depth reading: [Some Critical Issues for Future Research in Creativity](#)

"Psychologists have studied creativity for decades, developing a variety of tests to assess creativity and creative potential in individuals. Using these tests to guide them, cognitive neuroscientists are now using sophisticated neuroimaging tools to assess the neuroanatomical differences between more-creative and less-creative individuals, with the hopes of developing an understanding of creativity from the bottom-up, so to speak. If we are ever to understand creativity in an evolutionary perspective, then we must be able to link the extraordinary painting or inspired insight to the brain structures from which they sprang." [John S Allen, Ph D](#)

The neural activity of freestyle rappers

One of the most interesting studies in recent times (2012) involved [measuring neural activity in freestyle rappers](#). Historically, waiting for creatives to have their 'eureka' moments could take days and that made it difficult to measure the brain patterns that happened when creativity was in effect. Rapping is a highly creative process with an intense production/delivery rate, which makes it ideal to study – it has a short time span to track with clear structure as to when the rapper is actually in creative mode.

Results from the study showed that during creative activity, the decision-making area of our brain (dorsolateral prefrontal cortex) is inactive and the area for emotional response is extremely active (the medial prefrontal cortex). This area is also responsible for learning association, context, and emotional response.

“Artists showed lower activity in part of their frontal lobes, called the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, during improvisation, and increased activity in another area, called the medial prefrontal cortex. The areas that were found to be ‘deactivated’ are associated with regulating other brain functions.” [Allen Braun](#)

[Research by Dr Alice Flaherty](#) shows that there is a link between dopamine and creativity.

“Being creative is not a passive process, and creative people are more responsive to sensory stimulation, have higher baseline levels of arousal, and increased goal-directed behaviour. In Flaherty’s findings, people vary in terms of their level of creative drive according to the activity of the dopamine pathways of the limbic system. Dopamine mediates reward-seeking behaviour and appreciation for music and beautiful faces—Flaherty suggests that creative motivation also originates in these dopaminergic pathways.”

John S Allen, Ph D

The implications of this explain why artists have often claimed to be more creative whilst under the influence of drugs or alcohol, when dopamine is heightened. Dopamine is also released during exercise, when we are relaxed, when we feel pleasure and at times such as when we are listening to music.

Shelley H Carson, university researcher, psychologist and author of *Your Creative Brain* says that distraction is needed to allow the brain time to process a problem.

“If you are stuck on a problem, an interruption can force an incubation period. In other words, a distraction may provide the break you need to disengage from a fixation on the ineffective solution.”

[Shelley H Carson](#)

James Webb Young already knew this in the 1940s when he wrote *A Technique For Producing Ideas*. He realised you have to allow the mind time to digest its ingredients before it will deliver an idea.

And, essentially, we must be relaxed to achieve the open mode:

“Why is a relaxed state of mind so important for creative insights? When our minds are at ease—when those alpha waves are rippling through the brain—we’re more likely to direct the spotlight of attention inward, toward that stream of remote associations emanating from the right hemisphere. In contrast, when we are diligently focused, our attention tends to be directed outward, toward the details of the problems we’re trying to solve. While this pattern of attention is necessary when solving problems analytically, it actually prevents us from detecting the connections that lead to insights. ‘That’s why so many insights happen during warm showers,’ Bhattacharya says. ‘For many people, it’s the most relaxing part of the day.’ It’s not until we’re being massaged by warm water, unable to check our e-mail, that we’re finally able to hear the quiet voices in the backs of our heads telling us about the insight. The answers have been there all along—we just weren’t listening” [Jonah Lehrer.](#)

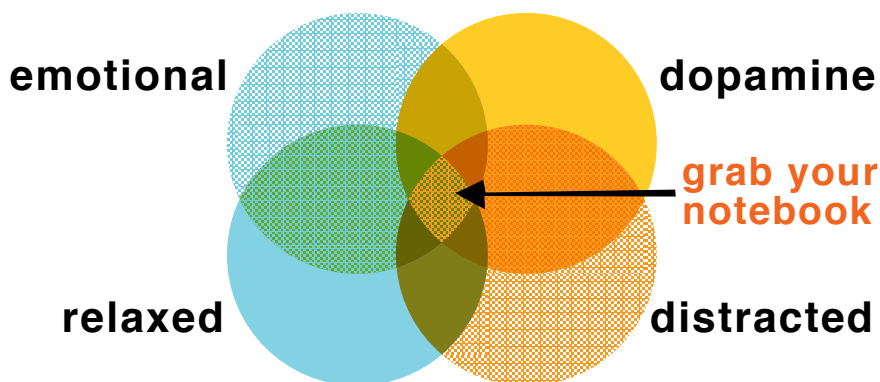
[Imagine](#)

Therefore, research would indicate that the best environments in which to incubate creativity are:

- When we are in touch with our emotional responses
- When dopamine is being released
- When we are relaxed
- When we are distracted from routine

So when does this perfect storm arise? In the shower, exercising, cooking to unwind, listening to music. Any activity where we are relaxed, yet focused on a mundane function and not thinking is our sweet spot for ideas.

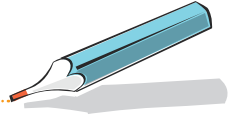
I usually have great creative idea for projects just as I am about to fall asleep – if I don't make the effort to turn the light on and make a note, when I wake up, it's gone.



Always carry a notebook for when inspiration strikes

"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."
Seneca, Roman Philosopher

Creative Tip:

**Cleese's advice to get into an open state is to:**

Find space where you will be undisturbed
Set an amount of time to remove pressure
Be playful and use humour
Set a time for decision and delay until that point

Create the right environment to be creative.

Find a space that removes you from association with work or pressure (preferably not home).



4. Imitation

“All ideas are second-hand, consciously and unconsciously drawn from a million outside sources... It takes a thousand men to invent a steam engine, or or a photograph, or a telephone... and the last man gets the credit and we forget the others”

Mark Twain



Imitation

There are no *new* ideas

Is it possible to have a *new* idea? In a world of information overload how can anyone have a thought that hasn't already been? Following [research by Dr Martin Hilbert](#), it was estimated that in 1986 we were exposed to 40 newspapers' worth of information every day (if you estimated an 85 page newspaper). In 2007, we were exposed to 174 newspapers' worth of information every day, and taking into account the explosion of internet traffic growth experienced since 2005, I would expect that that figure has risen considerably.

Estimates state that 295 exabytes pieces of information exist in the world – that equates to 315 times the amount of grains of sand (in the world). So the odds of having an original idea are pretty slim.

295 exabytes =
295 000 000 000 000 000 000 000 bytes

With this vast amount of information floating around, you may not realise that your idea has been influenced by external sources, but subconsciously, your brain could have processed something it has already seen. This is actually a common occurrence with artists producing a piece of work which they believe to be unique but in reality it's a copy of another piece of art they were exposed to and had forgotten about. The brain subconsciously tricked the artist into believing it was original.

There is a fine line between inspiration and replication.

[George Harrison famously lost a copyright infringement case](#) for 'subconsciously' copying the Ronnie Mack hit, *He's So Fine* performed by the Chiffons in his song *My Sweet Lord*. This unintentional infringement cost Harrison £1.5 million.

'Multiple discovery phenomenon'

The '[multiple discovery phenomenon](#)' is recognised in science and technology fields: the same innovation is created at the same time, but in different locations. A simultaneous breakthrough. If you consider that scientists are reading the same research, building with the same materials, using the same technology and drawing from the same cultural influences - **coincidence is inevitable**.

"I invented nothing new. I simply assembled the discoveries of other men behind whom were centuries of work. Had I worked fifty, ten or even five years before, I would have failed." **Henry Ford**

We learn by copying

How do we learn to talk, write, draw, play the piano? We learn by copying. At school, we slavishly copy notes to reference and study so that we can then begin to expand and begin to think for ourselves. [Great artists and writers continue with this process to stimulate their own inspiration](#): Hunter S Thompson used to type out the Fitzgerald classic *The Great Gatsby* just to "get the feeling of what it was like to write that way". Fitzgerald's novel was on his mind while he was working on *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

Chapter 4: Imitation

Renaissance apprentice painters would train by copying their masters' work and filling in the scenery in large paintings. This enabled them to perfect their skill, progress and be recognised in their own right: [One legend tells](#) of the young Leonardo da Vinci painting an angel so perfectly that his master Verrocchio broke his brushes in two and gave up painting forever in recognition of his pupil's superior abilities.

Copying is how we learn - We need copying to build a foundation of knowledge and understanding.

When I was a child, I spent all my time drawing and reading and one of my favourite past-times was replicating cartoons. I was a huge Garfield fan and to practise my drawing skills would spend hours copying drawings so it looked like an exact replication. The hours I spent drawing the cat over and over again taught me composition, character form and how to distort proportions to make 'cute' animals. This was a foundation for developing my illustration skills and I then progressed to find my own unique style.

Today, if I am working on a new project I collate references from other artwork, designs, articles or books which are all on a similar level with what I want to achieve. I break down the composition of each one and dissect what makes it work. Just as Hunter S Thompson retyped *The Great Gatsby*, this process helps to put you in the optimum state so you can go on to generate your own ideas.

"...Substantially all ideas are second-hand, consciously and unconsciously drawn from a million outside sources...It takes a thousand men to invent a telegraph, or a steam engine, or a phonograph, or a photograph, or a telephone, or any other Important thing and the last man gets the credit and we forget the others..." **Mark Twain**

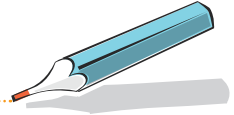
Adaptation of existing ideas

What is often seen in creative product development is that a ground-breaking innovation is more likely to fail, as it is seen as too much of a risk. Once the first follower spots the potential and, creates a second generation of the innovation with a few tweaks, this is the product which is most likely to succeed. The most famous example of this being how Apple saw the potential of the *Xerox Alto* personal computer and, after copying and improving the radical graphical interface, produced the *Apple Lisa*. It is often said that the genius of Apple is not in their innovation per se, but in Jobs' ability to recognise potential and measure the risk of being the first follower.

In [*The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell](#), the phenomenon of trends is discussed, specifically, at what point a product begins to break rank and become a runaway success. According to Gladwell, the majority of huge social trends were not innovative new products, but subtle variations and adaptations of existing ideas.

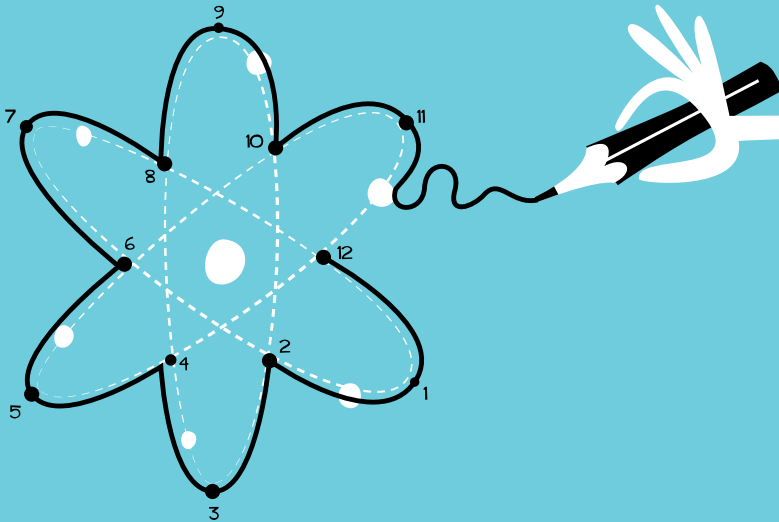
“The act of creation is surrounded by a fog of myths. Myths that creativity comes via inspiration, that original creations break the mould, that they are the product of geniuses and appear as quickly as electricity can heat a filament. But creativity isn’t magic, it happens by applying ordinary tools of thought to existing materials.”
Kirby Ferguson, *Everything is a Remix*

Creative Tip



Find what inspires you or what you aspire to in terms of work. Analyse it, understand its structure and appeal copy it repeatedly (for your own personal benefit only), try different variations and through your own iterations, evolve a unique version. The more you go through the motion of replication, the more your brain will *learn* the process and start to fire up its own unique ideas without having to look to others.

5. Connecting the dots



“Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while”

Steve Jobs

Connecting the dots

Code is a means of conveying complex information in a clear and unambiguous manner. This is utilised most effectively in the military, in computer programming and in classic forms of communication such as morse code and semaphore. The code represents in-depth information with simple, predetermined key signals.

The advantage of a code system is that large amounts of information can be transmitted efficiently and quickly. Text acronyms such as LMAO, LOL and WTF are examples of code used in everyday situations. During WWII, when letter writing was at its peak, sweethearts and lovers would use [acronyms](#) such as SWALK (sealed with a loving kiss), HOLLAND (hope out love lasts and never dies) and the racy EGYPT (look it up). In 1879, a code known as [the Phillips Code](#) was developed for telegraph communication which abbreviated phrases as one and two number digits such as 2: Important business, 29: Private deliver in sealed envelope and the 19th century equivalent of sexting – 88: love and kisses.

Pattern making machine

The brain picks up code from the environment and attempts to make sense by rearranging it into familiar patterns. Patterns are stored through exposure to other patterns. Upon an encounter with an unfamiliar pattern, the brain will run through its catalogue of stored information looking for an exact match or similar pattern. The brain is a natural pattern making machine and connection processor and this is its key to creativity:

The ability to make connections and see relationships between seemingly random elements is the secret to creativity.

Relationships between facts

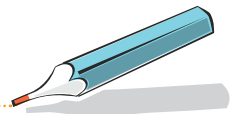
James Webb Young's premise for generating ideas (in *A Technique For Producing Ideas*) is a basic concept:

Collect and be exposed to a variety of reference materials and then look for the relationships between facts. Combine old elements to make new ideas.

It's not rocket science. In fact, the biggest challenge in being creative and generating ideas is letting go and sitting with the discomfort of waiting for the brain to see the connections.

"Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while." **Steve Jobs**

Creative Tip



Make an ideas wall – dedicate a space in your environment where you can fill a wall with collated reference material. You can make notes on the pages, use colour-coded pens, push pins and string to start to make connections visually.

After spending time sitting and studying the wall, your brain will begin to make visual connections.

Pinterest is a convenient tool to collate reference material online, but the physical act of having pages you can touch and move around will stimulate connections and possibilities.

6.No fear



“Failure is an essential component of innovation... I would be haunted by not trying at all. Better to try and fail - I could live with that.”

Jeff Bezos

No fear

Have you ever watched children playing with dolls or action figures? Their creativity is astounding – creating narratives and interactions between characters for hours with inanimate plastic objects. Children have brilliant creative minds. The problem is that as we grow older and learn to be more self-conscious, we *learn* to fear ridicule for our opinions and our creativity shrivels.

“All children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as they grow up.” Picasso

Taught to fear being wrong

Children have no fear of looking foolish or being wrong, they incessantly ask questions about everything and have the benefit of being information sponges. Unfortunately, during the course of education children are taught that mistakes are wrong and being wrong is stigmatised. So we become conditioned to not be wrong – even to the detriment of experimenting with ideas until we find the right solution. We become so afraid to fail that we don't even try.

“If you're not prepared to be wrong, then you will never come up with something original.” [Sir Ken Robinson, Schools Kill Creativity, TED Talk, 2006](#)

Many creative and brilliant people come out of the education system thinking they are neither, believing they are not very bright, not talented, not able to contribute any real value to society because the subjects they showed natural talent for and brilliance in were not considered of value and were even stigmatised.

Creativity is educated out of us as we develop.

A leap of faith

The only real fear I have is flying. I have faced my phobia several times by taking the *Fear of Flying* course through British Airways, more than once. What I find unique and difficult about facing this fear is the commitment to the process and the lack of control. Other types of phobia treatment involve gradual and monitored exposure through stages until you are acclimatised to face the fear full on. With flying, you don't have that same luxury of acclimatisation, you either get on the plane and take off or you don't, and once you are on it you can't get off till it lands again. You have to take a leap of faith and 'ride it out' until the plane lands – that makes it a hard phobia to face. Voicing an idea is also a leap of faith that you have to commit to and 'go along for the ride' once it's out there. I agree with Jeff Bezos – it's better to try and have an idea that is rejected than to not even try at all.

"Failure is an essential component of innovation...I would be haunted by not trying at all. Better to try and fail – I could live with that." **Jeff Bezos**

I think we have all encountered a situation where we had to propose an idea or put forward our own thoughts in a group – an art school critique session, a pitch, a work brainstorming session, a discussion in the pub – and felt afraid to voice our opinion. When you put forward a new idea you are exposing your ego to great risk of ridicule. This can be enough for even those who possess the thickest skin to withhold their ideas because they lack the confidence to speak and thereby get overlooked as *not creative*. But we have to learn to push through this fear and the more we do, the more we become immune to fear and the more our confidence grows.

"If the idea is not at first absurd then there is no hope for it." **Einstein**

Fail fast without stigma

A new concept of 'fail fast' culture has been emerging in young start-ups who now pride themselves on their ability to make

mistakes as quickly as possible and without stigma so then can learn, improve perfect and then move forward even more quickly. If only we could instill the same mentality in the education system.

Disassociate and protect the ego

In Roman culture, it was the belief that intellect and creativity was something external – a gift from the gods via a divine spirit. (The origin for the word 'genius' is: *attendant spirit present from one's birth, innate ability or inclination*.) This meant that they never took full credit for their work and ideas but saw themselves as blessed channels who gratefully accepted divine intervention. Thus, their egos were protected from *failure* by removing responsibility and projecting it onto the external spirits. So if you couldn't think of an idea then it wasn't your fault – the spirits hadn't shown up that day. Anxiety removed.

Disconnecting from fear

After the phenomenal success of her book, *Eat Pray Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert feels that she is now stigmatised with the 'follow up book' syndrome – a position filled with fear and anxiety. She is constantly asked, "*Are you afraid you are never going to top that?*" and her answer is yes, she is very afraid of this. In her popular TED talk she talks about how she imagines her creativity as something external in order to deal with the pressure of being creative.

Embracing the fear

Joshua Davis talks about the pitfalls of success and how achieving success affected his creative output and his sense of wonder for what he does. "*I've done it, what do I do now?*" he thought after receiving industry acclaim. Several years of producing repetitive work led Davis to the conclusion that "*in fear is where my greatest thinking happens*." He challenged himself to push out of his comfort zone and accept a new role, therefore resurrecting his feeling of "*I don't know what I am doing*." And once again finding his wonder and passion for his creative work.

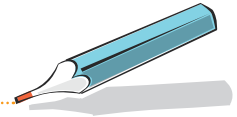
“Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm.” **Winston Churchill**

For most people, the fear of failure kills creativity quickly, but for some, it generates a pressure under which they produce their best work. The reason some people excel under pressure is the extra work they put into a project to avoid failure. Whether you break under pressure or not, you have to be prepared to keep working through the discomfort and fear of being wrong to get to the innovative ideas.

Don't be afraid to fail

“I haven't failed. I've had 10,000 ideas that didn't work.” **Benjamin Franklin**

Creative Tip



When brainstorming in a group, set rules that deter any fear or negativity that can squash creativity.

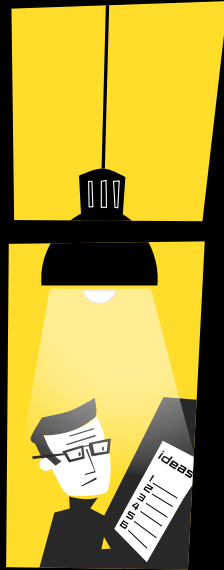
Allow the most junior person in the room to speak first and then in turn to most senior.

No criticism or rejection of an idea – anything can be considered.

Use humour to break any solemnity and encourage playfulness.

Remove any condescending, overbearing or negative people from the group to encourage a *safe space* to open up.

7.Tenacity



“Inspiration is for amateurs — the rest of us just show up and get to work.”

Chuck Close

Tenacity

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." **Aristotle**

The brain is a muscle and the more you practice thinking skills the more they improve. Scientific evidence shows that synapses forge physical channels through the brain which become stronger and more deeply ingrained the more an action is repeated. Therefore, through repeated thinking skills, you can become more creative.

In the book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell believes that experts and high-flyers have logged at least 10,000 hours of practice in their field before they achieve great success. The best illustration of his theory is about the musical phenomenon that was the Beatles:

"The Beatles had a musical gift, but what made them the Beatles was a random invitation to play in Hamburg...where they performed live as much as five hours a night, seven days a week. Talented? Absolutely. But they also simply put in more hours than anyone else."
Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*

Before they went to Germany, they were a reasonable band but upon their return were such experts at playing live they took the world by storm with their polished routine. No overnight success – the Beatles worked hard and learnt through trial and error what worked for them musically.

Hard work, it seems, is the one thing which guarantees creativity.

David Ogilvy was famously hard working, keeping extraordinary hours (read *Confessions of an Ad Man*) and used to insist on writing endless variations of every headline before he would approve one. His sheer hard work and tenacity is what created the greatest advertising agency of its era on Madison Avenue.

“Inspiration is for amateurs — the rest of us just show up and get to work.” **Chuck Close**

Life experience has more value than qualifications

Even though I went to university myself, I have always been an advocate for life experience over education and for ‘learning on the job.’ I think this prepares you much better for being resourceful, motivated and creative. When you are hungry, tired, have bills to pay and don’t have the luxury of a full-time job, you get creative about earning money. Apart from a six month period when I was officially employed by Hallmark in-house (awful experience in office politics) I have hustled, used my initiative and evolved with creative trends to maintain an income through my own endeavours since leaving university (in 1995). I’m not going to pretend I haven’t made a great deal of mistakes and had a lot of set backs, but 18 years later I am still doing what I love. I have worked exceptionally hard and spent many a night in tears from sheer exhaustion and setbacks. I have learnt the ability to spot a trend, keep evolving and learning and also the resilience to get back up again once I am knocked down. And that is more valuable than my university degree.

“I am a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.” **Thomas Jefferson**

“A writer who waits for ideal conditions under which to work will die without putting a word on paper.” **EB White**

Tolerate the discomfort

John Cleese credits much of his creativity to his tenacity and ability to stick with a problem. Cleese says he is prepared to tolerate the discomfort and anxiety associated with problem solving until the right solution is reached and not take the easy *first* solution. Whereas most people want to remove discomfort as quickly as possible and take the first early solution as a means to stop the anxiety – their discomfort is more important than their creativity. Creative research by Donald W MacKinnon supports this theory.

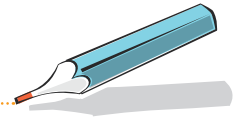
Chapter 7: Tenacity

[MacKinnon's research](#) also shows that [IQ is not relevant to creativity](#). Therefore, this indicates that tenacity and process are the key and not natural talent or intelligence.

Idea generation is about following a process and then trusting that the mind will do its job. Letting go of the outcome so that the brain can digest the input of information find the connections within the ingredients and then when, and only when, it's ready, it will throw out an idea, seemingly from the ether. Waiting for that moment can bring great discomfort and being able to sit with that feeling of anxiety is the ability to wait for the best ideas to form.

"You can't try to do things, you must simply DO them." **Ray Bradbury**

Creative Tip



To get into a creative state, find a space where you can be undisturbed. Set an amount of time, ideally 90 minutes (as the brain needs a break after this length of time) and allow your thought process the space and time it needs to work on the problem. Keep working through solutions long after the first solution appears. Even if you think you have found the best solution, generate more ideas until your time runs out. Acknowledge and accept the discomfort of the effort without allowing it to distract your task.

8. Discipline



**"Sometimes you just get in there
and force yourself to work and
something good will come out of it"**

Jack White

Discipline

Get into the habit of generating ideas everyday

“The strategy is simple, I think. The strategy is to have a practice, and what it means to have a practice is to regularly and reliably do the work in a habitual way.” **Seth Godin**

If I want to improve my swim time from a 40-minute mile down to a 30-minute mile, then I have to swim at least three times a week. It isn't magic – it's called practise.

At first it's hard. I feel like I am swimming through treacle, my breathing is laboured and I tire quickly. After only a few weeks, though, my stroke and strength improve as my body becomes fitter and muscle memory *learns* the stroke subconsciously. When I swim two miles it's always the first mile that is the hardest. When I hit about 70 lengths my body goes into an automatic state. By the 120th length my body has totally taken over and I no longer direct my actions. **The same applies to any skill: routine, discipline and action brings you flow.**

Practise, practise, practise

As mentioned earlier, the more the brain processes a routine or skill - such as a new language or driving a car - the deeper the synapses physically carve a channel in the brain. Which explains to some degree why when we first learn a skill, we have to concentrate intensely: it takes a great deal of energy but through applied discipline, eventually it becomes almost automatic and we don't appear to think about what we are doing - the subconscious takes over. **Everything becomes easier with practise and repetition.**

Creativity can actually thrive in routine and discipline. Since he found great success, Jack White from The White Stripes talks about how he sets himself restrictions and deadlines to encourage creative flow. The freedom that comes hand in hand with not having to work

for a living but purely for pleasure can be a double-edged sword, taking away the hunger and allowing ideas to become stagnant.

“Sometimes you just get in there and force yourself to work and something good will come out of it.” **Jack White**

Just do it

Ben Hammersley, Editor-at-Large for *Wired UK* magazine came and spoke at an intimate gathering in Leeds a few years ago. Brilliant speaker: exceedingly personable and good at telling stories. He told an anecdote about how it was his ambition to be a war correspondent whilst he was a journalist at *The Times*. So he sought advice from his editor and over several drinks confessed his desire to visit war-torn countries, risk life and limb and get to the heart of the news. His editor responded with sage advice: If you want to be a war correspondent find a war, and correspond.

Don't just talk about it, get out there and do it. If you want to be a writer, then write. If you want to be a painter – paint. If you want to be more creative, then simply keep thinking of ideas. They may seem unimaginative or uninspired at first, but the more you do it the better you get. Until one day you realise you are creative and have great ideas.

“Do. Or do not. There is no try.” **Yoda**

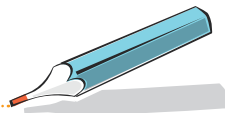
[James Altucher sets a task to think of ten new ‘things’ everyday.](#)

Those can range from ten new flavours of coffee to ten ways to make my partner happy to ten ways I could get to the moon and back. The process of making yourself think of solutions and ideas on an everyday basis will vastly improve your thinking skills, just like going to the gym and training everyday helps me swim a faster mile.

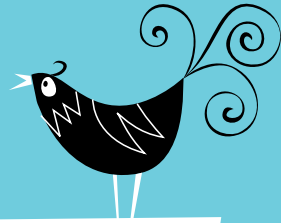
“One percent inspiration, Ninety-nine percent perspiration.” **Thomas Edison**

“Creativity arises from a constant churn of ideas, and one of the easiest ways to encourage that fertile froth is to keep your mind engaged with your project. When you work regularly, inspiration strikes regularly.” **Gretchen Rubin**

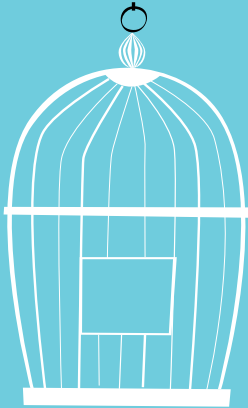
Creative Tip



As above. Same time. Every day. Sit and write a list of ideas on any random subject and set a goal of ten ideas – sounds much easier than it is!



9. Letting go



"if you hoard your ideas you will end up living off your reserves and eventually become stale. If you give away everything you have, you are left with nothing. This forces you to look, to be aware, to replenish. The more you give away the more comes back to you."

Paul Arden

Letting go

And finally, let go of your ideas. Do not hold onto them. The law of the universe abhors a vacuum so the more you release, the more the space will be replenished.

“If you hoard your ideas, you will end up living off your reserves and eventually become stale. If you give away everything you have, you are left with nothing. This forces you to look, to be aware, to replenish. The more you give away the more comes back to you.”

Paul Arden

“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.”

Maya Angelou

Creativity TLDR:

Creativity is a way of operating

Be prepared to be wrong before you are right

Be an information sponge

Always be curious and asking questions

Be open, not closed

Always carry a notebook and make notes

Imitate to innovate – learn by copying

Connect the dots

Be prepared to fail before you succeed

Tolerate the discomfort of thinking

Work at it every day

Don't hoard ideas – give them away

What does creativity mean to you?

**Rand Fishkin, Wil Reynolds,
Dave Trott, Bas Van den Beld,
Lee Odden, Paddy Moogan,
Neil Patel, Chris Brogan**



Rand Fishkin



Cofounder of [Moz](#) (previously *SEOMoz*) and probably the most recognised figure in the SEO industry. An acknowledged thought leader and contributor to the development of online marketing. With little introduction needed, Rand is considered a worldwide authority on all things SEO.

Rand Fishkin

What does creativity mean to you?

For me, creativity is allowing new ideas and connections between those ideas to form, gestate, and mature into something that provides greater usefulness, value, and enjoyment than what came before.

What would you consider the most creative campaign/tactic you have seen online?

One of my very favorites in the business marketing world was Queensland's Best Job in the World contest, which has now been adopted by every province in Australia. They took a tiny slice of the advertising budget and turned it into something that created intense passion, joy, excitement, and massive results through purely inbound channels (like organic search, social media, blogging, etc).

What is the most creative thing you can think of in the real world? (eg the BIC biro, the combustion engine, Roald Dahl books, the Coca Cola bottle, tea bags or anything that has rocked your world with its beauty, simplicity or elegant and efficient design).

I'm a big fan of art, and two of my favorite creative artists are Banksy and Christo. I'm hard-pressed to think of anything more creative than some of the projects they've pulled off.

Where do you find inspiration for your creativity?

Reading fiction is a big one for me. Another is travel. Both help me disconnect from the day-to-day problems and stresses I face to explore something new. I find that freeing myself of context (which both great fiction and great places do) is remarkably effective at expanding my thinking.

Who is the most creative person you can think of?

I already mentioned Banksy and Christo :-). But I might say Neil Gaiman. The range of characters, stories, and worlds he's created over the years are extraordinary.

Wil Reynolds



Wil Reynolds founded [SEER Interactive](#) in 2002 based in Philadelphia, USA. An active speaker and blogger in the SEO community Wil is a leading SEO authority and personality.

Wil Reynolds

What does creativity mean to you?

I don't know if there is a definition of creativity.

What would you consider the most creative campaign/tactic you have seen online?

The most creative SEO campaign I've ever seen is the '[Like a Boss](#)' campaign.

It really shows me how you can make SEO about something more than just a top spot on Google, that is creativity to me. Creativity is taking something like that and flipping it on its head in a way that everyone notices, pays attention, and gives a nod. That campaign is just smart!

What is the most creative thing you can think of in the real world?

The most creative thing in the world? Wow, that is a big tough one. I tend to like the type of creativity like the iPhone, because of its simplicity and ease of use. Apple took something we all used but kind of hated (the smart phone + stylus) and flipped it. No longer is listening to your music, browsing the web, and taking pictures on your phone 'creative' – that is the beauty of innovation that fits so well into our lives that within 10 years it becomes the norm. I seek inspiration in innovation over just creativity.

Where do you find inspiration for your creativity?

Finding creativity is easy, its about having your eyes open at all times. Remember in my example above, the inspiration came from a museum. I believe inspiration is all around us, we just need to

What Does Creativity Mean To You?

open our eyes and let it in. Sometimes looking past the obvious, it is something right in front of you, you just have to look deeper for a while - you have to just sit and stare long enough to let it come in. I think creativity can come from not being active too. So often we think we need to feel active looking for inspiration and at those moments we're probably over doing it. Just let it in.

Who is the most creative person you can think of?

The most creative person I know is Ed Tettemer - I have seen his work from a distance, but I feel like he knows how to get at the core of what something is, or is all about and can find a way to help an organization break through the obvious. He's going to help us with our rebrand, and I cannot wait!

The next most creative is [George Ward](#) - he and I went to grade school together and his dad rescued me from a jungle gym I climbed up on once and was afraid to come down. George's crew built a Nerf gun powered by Twitter. His company recently built a Christmas tree powered by [Dre Beats](#).

Dave Trott



Advertiser, copywriter and author of [Creative Mischief](#) and [Predatory Thinking](#). Trained in New York, Dave worked on Madison Avenue before returning to London and working on memorable campaigns such as *Hello Tosh Gotta Toshiba* and *Ariston and on and on*. Dave is an excellent storyteller and speaker - [his blog](#) is highly recommended reading.

Dave Trott

What does creativity mean to you?

Creativity is an adjective not a noun.

So creativity is a quality in whatever you do: welder, footballer, designer, businessman, engineer, musician, parent, teacher.

The quality of surprise.

Creativity is the opposite of conventional wisdom.

But creativity isn't always a good thing: doctor, pilot, policeman, accountant.

People unthinkingly say they desire creativity.

Because most people confuse creativity with style.

As Edward de Bono said "*There are many people calling themselves creative who are actually mere stylists.*"

Style is making a nicer answer.

Creativity is asking a different question.

What would you consider the most creative campaign/tactic you have seen online?

Someone once asked Alfred Hitchcock if the perfect murder was possible.

Hitchcock said "*Of course it is, it happens all the time. What makes it perfect is that no one knows about it.*"

That's how it is with the very best advertising.

Like martial arts, achieving the maximum effect with minimum means.

The object is not to notice the advertising, it's to notice the effect.

What is the most creative thing you can think of in the real world?

In my opinion this question confuses creativity with '*beauty, simplicity and elegance*'.

Those three things are elements of style.

What Does Creativity Mean To You?

They MAY feature in a creative solution, but they are not necessary.
As Picasso said “*Good taste is the enemy of art*”
And as Helmut Krone said “*If you can look at something and say ‘I like it’ then it isn’t new.*”

Where do you find inspiration for your creativity?

Mainly in what's been left out.
When I look at something, or hear something, that makes me go “Wow”.
It's usually something that isn't explained.
Something that makes me do a doubletake.
I go past it, then realise what just happened.
Then I have to go back and look or listen again, take it apart.
And realise the brilliance is what it does with so much left out.
That's when I go “Wow”.

Who is the most creative person you can think of?

Bertrand Russell said that all philosophy is simply footnotes to Plato.
I think all advertising is footnotes to Bill Bernbach.

Recommended books written by Dave Trott:

[*Predatory Thinking*](#)
[*Creative Mischief*](#)

Lee Odden



Lee Odden is one of the leading speakers worldwide on social media and author of the book [Optimize](#). Based in Minneapolis, Lee is the CEO of [TopRank Online Marketing](#). Lee has been cited in publications such as Forbes, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Economist and Fortune Magazine.

Lee Odden

What does creativity mean to you?

Creativity means a combination of things for me, including: clever, unexpected, unique and *new*. Of course, there's often a visual or experiential component to creativity, but I think being creative is more than production of visually engaging experiences.

Creativity is also the lateral and unconventional thinking that goes into solving tough problems, aka 'creative problem solving'. That kind of creativity is absolutely essential when working in the digital marketing world - search, social, content, email, PR and ads.

What would you consider the most creative campaign/tactic you have seen online?

At the time, when we created the first conference eBook for Content Marketing World, it was very creative in terms of the theme, visuals and way in which content was sourced, promoted and re-used.

To help create awareness of the Content Marketing World event with minimal resources and little time, we decided to create a 'remarkable content object' that would create value for prospective delegates, registered attendees, speakers and the conference organization.

We developed a template around 'secret agents' in conjunction with 'content marketing'. By crowdsourcing tips in character as secret agents looking to save the content marketing world, we were able to help speakers promote their participation with the event. In turn, their investment into the content object (eBook) motivated them to each help promote it.

Through creative writing, visual content and communicating in character, the eBook provided a promotion vehicle for mutual

What Does Creativity Mean To You?

benefit of the the conference and speakers, attracting over 40,000 shares and thousands of downloads in just a few days with very little budget. Not only was the content creative (and optimized for search) but so was the solution for a compelling, impactful marketing tool with few resources and budget.

The eBook components were repurposed and uploaded to social networks and media hosting sites - everything optimized for search.

When the conference occurred, search demand for 'content marketing secrets' exploded and our digital assets occupied all 10 positions on Google during the event.

Since the conference, [the Content Marketing Secrets eBook](#) has been cited by numerous industry blogs as one of the best eBooks of the year. It's also attracted over 80,000 views on Slideshare.

What is the most creative thing you can think of in the real world? Off the top of my head, I'd say things that blend form and function are really creative to me, like [the Tesla](#). Dyson products are this way too.

I also think nature is the ultimate in creativity. Some of my Instagrams:



What Does Creativity Mean To You?

Where do you find inspiration for your creativity?

I am always looking for patterns and trends that I can use creatively in the large amounts of information I consume every day – industry news, blogs, articles and testing.

I find inspiration by looking outside of my normal work situation: movies, books, conversations, experiences. Over the past 8 years I've spent a lot of my time cross-pollinating my expertise (and exposure) by being actively involved in the Public Relations, New/ Social Media/Blogging and Direct Marketing industries – outside of search. As a result, many of the things I see popping up as new now in the search marketing world are things we've been mastering for several years.

Who is the most creative person you can think of?

My pop is amazingly creative. As an artist, he's a talented painter, sculptor, potter, landscape designer, welder, and knife smith. He's also been working with creative digital on computers years before I ever owned a computer myself.

Recommended books written by Lee Odden:

[Optimize. How to Attract and Engage More Customers by Integrating SEO, Social Media and Content Marketing](#)

Paddy Moogan



Paddy Moogan is Head of Growth Markets at [Distilled](#) and has spoken world wide mostly on link building and outreach. Paddy is the author of [The Link Building Book](#) and considered a leading authority in this niche.

Paddy Moogan

What does creativity mean to you?

For me it means thinking about things from a fresh perspective and not accepting the standard way of doing things. This doesn't mean that you always need to reinvent the wheel, rather you should be conscious of where things can be changed, improved and made differently.

What would you consider the most creative campaign/tactic you have seen online?

That's a tough one as I've seen quite a few. I know I'm biased but I think the ongoing campaign that Distilled have done for Simply Business with their guides for small businesses are great. Things like the analytics guide, Twitter guide and social media guide are great examples of creative content that fits with the target audience of the business.

I also really like the Airbnb neighbourhood guides which are very visual, highly detailed and fit perfectly with the information that their audience could be looking for.

What is the most creative thing you can think of in the real world?

I'm a big fan of engineering and cars, so I'm always fascinated by racing cars, in particular Formula One cars which are amazing pieces of machinery. I think that some of the innovations that are made are truly creative and require a certain mindset in order to achieve. I'm also a big fan of innovations on architectural design such as skyscrapers and bridges, the latter of which is designed to solve a problem.

Where do you find inspiration for your creativity?

I've never really thought of myself as a creative person, but when I'm trying to come up with ideas, I tend to broadly research a topic to see what has already been done, then totally move away from my computer and go somewhere quiet with a pen and notepad to start coming up with my own ideas. I do tend to get inspiration from watching others speak on topics and reading about the work that others have done.

Who is the most creative person you can think of?

Again, that is quite a tough one! I'd actually go for a 'real world' example and say Christopher Nolan because some of his films have been on another level. For example, Inception showed a level of creativity and thinking that puts him on a new level to other film directors and producers.

Recommended books written by Paddy Moogan

[*The Link Building Book*](#)

Neil Patel



Neil Patel, entrepreneur, marketer and blogger; is co-founder of [Crazy Egg](#), [Kissmetrics](#) and [Quick Sprout](#). In 2009 Neil was named as one of the top influencers on the web by The Wall Street Journal. He was recognized as a top 100 entrepreneur under the age of 30 by President Obama and one of the top 100 entrepreneurs under the age of 35 by the United Nations. Neil is based in Seattle.

Neil Patel

What does creativity mean to you?

Creativity to me means thinking outside of the box. You don't have to follow the norm and do things the way everyone else has done them. Being creative is a beautiful thing as it leads to innovation.

What would you consider the most creative campaign/tactic you have seen online?

I love how Dropbox increased their user growth through social sharing and growth hacking. Sure it may not seem that creative now, but when they started doing it, it was unique. It wasn't a widely used tactic and it caused them to become a multi billion dollar company.

What is the most creative thing you can think of in the real world?

I think a lot of things are creative. It would be too hard for me to name the 'most creative thing'... but here are a few examples: the pyramids, Mount Rushmore, or even the empire state building are cool/creative things in my mind.

Where do you find inspiration for your creativity?

The world. By talking to people, walking the streets, and just by going through my normal day, I end seeing a lot of amazing things. We all actually do, we just have to open our eyes to see them.

Who is the most creative person you can think of?

Elon Musk. He is a dreamer and is so passionate about what he is doing, he will eventually accomplish everything he is dreaming about.

Bas Van den Beld



Bas Van den Beld is founder of [State of Digital](#) and considered to be the leading authority within Europe on blogging, social media and online marketing strategy. Bas is a prolific and award winning speaker and attends most of the search conference events in the calendar.

Bas Van den Beld

What does creativity mean to you?

Creativity to me is thinking outside of the box, knowing to take a different route than most people would go into. This can mean a new idea, but also taking an existing something and shooting at it from a completely different angle.

What would you consider the most creative campaign/tactic you have seen online?

A very creative one was a bingo website trying to build links by doing a competition for a new 'face of the site'. But instead of going for the most popular or most tempting girl for example they chose the route of finding the woman with the prettiest 'bingo wings'. Which created all sorts of reactions, but most of them with the name 'Bingo' in it, which made them rank pretty nice on it.

What is the most creative thing you can think of in the real world? That's a tough one! There are many answers to that. I probably should say the invention of fire. Nobody knew before how valuable and multi-usable that would be. Or the invention of the telephone. Before that no-one had the urge to call another person, and look at us now :)

Where do you find inspiration for your creativity?

I try to find inspiration anywhere I can really. Every book I read, every person I speak to or every picture I see, it will all trigger creativity if you realise there are many different sides to it.

What Does Creativity Mean To You?

Who is the most creative person you can think of?

I really should say my oldest daughter (I have 2 and a son). She can have nothing and still create something by using things around her. And she always finds a different unexpected angle to things. She's a proper McGyver and philosopher in one :).

But you probably want a 'real world' example. Which is dangerous because you're bound to look at people like Steve Jobs, who knew how to think a few steps ahead and there are so many more creative people out there. I'd like to think people at Heineken's marketing department for example are extremely creative. Too many to name one really :).

Chris Brogan



[Chris Brogan](#) is an online entrepreneur, marketer, author and speaker. A well known personality and conference speaker, Chris has also appeared on the Dr Phil Show (US), is a New York Times bestseller author of six books and has consulted with Disney, Microsoft, Coke, Pepsico, Google and Motorola.

Chris Brogan

What does creativity mean to you?

It means finding a more-than-minimal way to communicate my interests and ideas.

What would you consider the most creative campaign/tactic you have seen online?

I don't track campaigns. What comes to mind is W/K's Old Spice videos they shot so quickly in related to Twitter.

What is the most creative thing you can think of in the real world?

Creative in the real world to me is when people shift our thinking in a meaningful way. I love [the fun theory](#) for that reason.

Where do you find inspiration for your creativity?

I find inspiration from seeing others struggle. I use those moments to get creative and help other people.

Who is the most creative person you can think of?

The most creative person I know is a mother. Any mother. They have so much to do to accomplish their goals and to keep their kids happy.

Recommended books written by Chris Brogan

[The Freaks Shall Inherit The Earth](#)

Resources

Books & Videos



Recommended Reading...

[Edward De Bono, Lateral Thinking](#)

[Dave Trott, Creative Mischief](#)

[David Ogilvy, Confessions of an Advertising Man](#)

[Paul Arden, It's Not How Good You Are,
It's How Good You Want To Be](#)

[Claude C Hopkins, My Life in Advertising](#)

[Steven Pressfield, The War of Art](#)

[Macolm Gladwell, The Tipping Point](#)

[Simon Sinek, Start with Why?](#)

[Michael Gelb, How to Think like Leonardo da Vinci](#)

[James Webb Young, A Technique for Producing Ideas](#)

[Ken Robinson, Out of Our Minds](#)

Recommended Videos

[El Bulli documentary](#)

[Sir Ken Robinson, How Schools Kill Creativity, TED talk](#)

[Elizabeth Gilbert, You Elusive Creative Genuis, TED Talk](#)

[John Cleese, What Is Creativity](#)

[Stefan Sagmeister, The Power of Time Off, TED Talk](#)

[Jack White, Creativity and Restriction](#)

[Everything is a Remix – four part series](#)

[Chris Rock, Louis CK, Jerry Seinfeld and Ricky Gervais: Know Your Audience](#)

[Simon Sinek, How Great Leaders Inspire Action, TED talk](#)

[Joshua Davis, Never Let Success Get In The Way of Creativity](#)

[Steve Jobs, How to Live Before You Die, Stanford University Commencement Speech](#)

[JK Rowling, The Fringe Benefits of Failure, Harvard Commencement Speech](#)

Thank you for reading; I hope you enjoyed the book.

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