



the
creative
edge

strategies
for 24/7
creativity

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The Creative Edge

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**Dedicated to
everyone who has
forgotten how
creative they really are ...**

The Creative Edge

**“What
if our
strengths
are not in the
creation of new
technologies, but
in a clever use of
other people’s
technologies?”**

**Thomas Barlow, author of
The Australian Miracle
- an innovative nation
revisited**

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Introduction

Having progressed from the agricultural age through the industrial age to the information age, it seems that we are now on the cusp of a new age – the conceptual age. Just as the industrial revolution saw mass production of material goods replace agriculture as the dominant economic activity, and the technological revolution saw the rise of communications and service industries, creativity is set to replace information as the driver of global economic activity.

As Daniel Pink notes in the introduction to his book *A Whole New Mind*, while the last few decades have belonged to certain kinds of people with certain kinds of minds, such as computer programmers, lawyers and number-crunchers, the future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind –

**creators and empathisers, pattern recognisers
and meaning makers.**

Given the speed with which new products and services can be brought to the market, not to mention the power and reach of information and communication technology, ongoing creativity and innovation is the only true means to achieving sustainable competitive advantage.

In societies and organisations everywhere, power is gradually shifting away from those with status and financial leverage towards those who deal in the currency of creativity and

innovation. Increasingly, we are seeing collaborations between people and teams that transcend traditional boundaries. This is a catalyst for creativity. It has been reported that 50 percent of new inventions come from individuals outside the field.

The scarcest resource in society, and in business, is not investment – it is imagination. It's telling that many high-flyers are now eschewing the traditional MBA in favour of an MFA – post-graduate training in fine arts.

In the conceptual age, it isn't knowledge that will be our most important asset. It will be creativity, imagination and foresight – applying our knowledge in new ways.

Education has a role to play here, for more than ever before, people need to learn how to learn. It's no longer sufficient, if indeed it ever was, to learn a whole bunch of stuff, because the only certainty is change. At its core, education needs to be about transformation, and about creating the capacity for continuous innovation.

So, are we all creative? While the nature/nurture debate is never far away, it's clear that we all have the potential to exercise creativity in one way or another. Further, we can take steps to maximise that potential by exploring tools and techniques to create a favourable environment in which creativity can bloom. It's important to recognise here that we are all unique individuals. We can't teach creativity to a group of people and then expect them all to perform in a similar way.

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In ***The Creative Edge: Strategies for 24/7 Creativity***, you will discover a range of tools to help unleash your inherent creativity, together with accounts from people in all walks of life of how they make creativity work for them.

Welcome to the conceptual age.

What is Creativity?

Apparently, there are more than 60 different definitions of creativity to be found in the psychological literature, but for now, it's probably sufficient to defer to the Macquarie dictionary, which tells us that to create is:

1. *to bring into being; cause to exist; produce.*
2. *to evolve from one's own thought or imagination.*

From this, it follows that to be creative means:

1. *having the quality or power of creating.*
2. *resulting from originality of thought or expression.*

Creativity is, therefore:

the state or quality of being creative; creative ability.

It seems clear then that creativity is the process by which we generate new ideas or concepts, or new associations between existing ideas or concepts – in everyday language, creativity is simply the act of making something new. To be creative is to see the same thing as everybody else, but think of something different.

There are many aspects to creativity, but core is the ability to take existing objects and combine them in different ways for new purposes. For example, Gutenberg took the wine press and the die punch and produced a printing press. Creativity

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also involves playing with the way things are interrelated to generate novel and useful ideas and solutions to everyday problems and challenges.

Which raises a very important point – creativity in its fullest sense involves both the generation of ideas, and making something happen as a result. Extending the definition of creativity to include practical application is very important, because although ideas can occur instantaneously, and are thought to emerge from one quadrant of the brain, the resulting application can take years to emerge, often as a result of a process that consists of several distinct phases, and utilises the particular capabilities of all four quadrants of the brain.

Defining creativity to include practical application also serves to highlight the applicability of creativity to the business world. It's not merely the exclusive domain of the arts world, or of the scientific community. Everything we do provides a potential outlet for creativity.

It's probably equally as useful to reflect on what creativity isn't: it isn't the passive acceptance that this is how things are, and there are no better ways of doing things. Nor is it the attitude that if we were meant to fly, we would have been born with wings. It's not the thought that it's not our job to do anything other than what we're being asked or paid to do, nor is it the desire to just drift along, making do with what we've got, even though we've got this nagging thought that, with just a little effort, we could probably come up with something that would make our work, or our life, easier, or better. It's not the thought that it's for other people, those weird types in the labs, or

artistic types, to be creative, nor is it thinking that if there's a good idea in there somewhere, it will emerge when it's good and ready.

In the course of preparing to write this piece, I did a little Googling, as one does, and stumbled across a quote from Walt Disney, who, in singing the praises of an iconic American institution (Walt has long since left the building – this was several decades ago), stated that 'Your imagination may be creaky, or timid, or dwarfed or frozen at points. The Reader's Digest can serve as a gymnasium for its training'.

That last phrase – about reading as a gymnasium for the imagination – got me thinking. At the time, I was editing a book about health and wellbeing, and earlier that day, had come across a section on fitness and exercise which noted that there were three types of activity – strength (or resistance), cardio (or endurance) and flexibility. It occurred to me that these three elements could also apply to our potential for creativity, and I thought of taking Walt Disney's point about training our imagination a little further. Just as the three types of exercise are necessary to maximise and maintain our physical fitness, in order to maximise the potential of our imagination, and therefore our creativity, perhaps it could be said that we need to develop:

- strength to think differently, and remain unbowed in the face of opposition or resistance
- endurance to keep working, searching for the next 'aha' moment

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- flexibility to be able to look at things in many ways, and to experiment with new combinations.

I'll leave you to decide whether or not this is a creative idea, but hopefully it serves to illustrate the point about the creative process – combining existing ideas and information in new ways. And if this one didn't quite do it, that's okay, because it then becomes an example of another key point – you have to be prepared to make lots of 'mistakes', and push on regardless, because it is only through trial and error that you will stumble across the diamonds in the dirt.

So, now that you know what creativity is, and isn't, it's time to discover how you can achieve the creative edge.

**“There is still
time. There is
always enough
time, enough
money, enough
of everything you
need to be who
you really are.”
Vanessa Hall**

Innovation and Creativity...

think about it!

To begin, I am going to ask you a question. I want you to answer the question before you read on.

The question is...

**ARE YOU A
CREATIVE PERSON?**

Write your answer here: _____

Now turn the page ...

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Well ... I hope your answer was a big fat

YES

If your answer was 'yes', you will be inspired by reading this book. If your answer was 'no', you really need to read this book, and you will also be inspired.

The reality is that we are all creative. The fact that you are reading this book suggests that you would either like to think of yourself as being creative and innovative, or you would like to develop those skills that you already possess further.

Let your mind relax, free up your thoughts, and read on.

What makes you creative?

Having variety in your life and the willingness to have a go! If you are capable of thinking, you are capable of being creative and innovative. People who become famous don't do it overnight. They get there through a combination of belief in themselves, determination, hard work and perseverance. They are self-motivated and, in some cases, have been encouraged as children to nurture and develop their passion.

Research has shown that we have few inhibitions when we are young, and as a result, are very creative. As we mature, unless we are encouraged to pursue our creativity, we don't develop our skills, and after a while we start to compare ourselves with others who are good at certain things, and feel that we aren't capable.

Think laterally

People are forever telling me that they are not creative, however they invariably confuse creativity with artistic ability. Creativity can be a thought, or a solution to a problem. Innovation is putting your ideas into action. People like to express themselves in various ways.

Creativity can be expressed through many different activities, including artistic pursuits such as decorating a cake, choosing colours to paint a house, or designing your office, and endless activities that require lateral thinking, from solving mathematical equations, bookkeeping, or repairing cars

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through to medical innovations such as the use of 'spray-on skin' by Dr Fiona Wood to treat the burns of victims of the Bali bombing.

Never let a chance go by

Not everybody has the same opportunities, but don't make the mistake of letting opportunities pass you by because you don't think you're good enough, or you think you're too old. Motivated people find a way to make things happen. Don't get to a point in your life where you find yourself saying 'If only I had...', or 'I didn't get the opportunity to...'. Make it happen! You're never too old to learn. What have you got to lose?

Practise makes perfect

It has been my experience that, in all the courses I've done, be it drawing, painting, designing or business, the key to success is research, desire, and **practise, practise and more practise**. They are all skills that can be learned. When you enrol in a course, there is usually a range of talent among the students. The more talented students are usually those who have had more experience, but that is not to say that you won't eventually reach that level, and even beyond.

Make a conscious effort to develop your creative skills

Carry a notebook and pen with you wherever you go, and write down your ideas as soon as you think of them, otherwise you will forget them. I am often amazed when I look back through my little notebooks and see what I have written in the past. Sometimes the ideas are so good that I find myself asking 'Did I really come up with that great idea?' Often, I don't remember that I had actually done it! Keep all your ideas until the time comes when you can put them into action.

Learn from others

I belong to a multicultural walking group. We meet regularly at various locations to take in nature's glory while we exercise. The different scenery and perspectives that we encounter infuses us with creativity, while the discussions along the way equip us to generate fresh ideas. We discuss anything and everything, from books and culture to our children and our jobs. You name it, we talk about it. In a way, we are 'brainstorming', developing our ideas and building on our knowledge.

We take turns in providing breakfast for the group after our walks. My friend Dorothy, whose Chinese name is Wai Ling, which means wisdom, lives up to her name as she is an avid learner, educator and philosopher. She also dazzles us with her immaculately presented platters of exotic food that are not only colourful, but also delicious and healthy. She adds

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interesting fruits such as pomegranates and figs, sparking conversations about different foods and unusual cooking techniques.

Sylvia is a Uruguayan Australian who runs an accounting practice. Sylvia says she is not creative, but I've seen her give a presentation to a room filled with business people after riding into the room on a scooter wearing a black cape and mask. She was introduced to the group as her alter ego, BAS Woman, the Bean Crusader (her company motto is 'We don't just count your beans, we help you grow them'), and proceeded to educate the group about their business activity statements and tax returns. How many accountants do you know who are that creative?

The moral of the story is we learn from each other, and I have to say that hanging out with people such as Wai Ling (Dorothy) and Sylvia certainly helps me to think outside the square. They even enrolled me in singing lessons for my birthday – that will certainly push me out of my comfort zone, although probably not as much as the motorbike lessons one of my sons has signed me up for!

A simple exercise

A great example of developing your creative skills is cooking. Everyone can learn how to cook if they can follow a recipe. The more recipes you follow, the better at it you become. You then start to be a bit creative, because you may not have a particular ingredient, so you substitute something else and before you know it, you've created your own dish that is

sometimes even nicer than the original recipe. Chefs go to a lot of trouble with the presentation of the food they prepare, because you eat with your eyes first. Overall, it makes your meal a more enjoyable experience, and makes you want to return to that restaurant. Perhaps this is an area where you can practise your own creativity. On your day off, spend a little time thinking about how you could make the meals you prepare look even more appealing or appetising.

Horticulturally speaking

Many people spend lots of money on things that make them feel good, like clothes, food or going to the gym, but gardening can also provide feelings of wellbeing. The feeling you have after creating something beautiful, like a garden, is quite addictive. It gets the endorphins, the happy hormones, going!

Gardening allows you to explore your creativity in so many ways, given that there are millions of plants out there in all shapes, sizes, textures and colours. You only have to watch some of the lifestyle shows on television to see how creative and innovative gardeners can be, creating garden art using old wrought-iron gates and water features out of second hand washing tubs. You are limited only by your imagination and the determination to have a go. The sky is the limit!

'But I don't have a green thumb'

Having a 'green thumb' comes from having the **desire to learn** what is required by the plants to ensure that they survive and thrive, so that you can create a fantastic masterpiece that suits

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your style. Most of my clients contact me because they don't know where to start. Firstly, they're not sure which plants to buy, and secondly, they don't think that they're creative.

It would be very easy for me at this point to simply say to them, 'Don't worry, leave it to me. I can design and install your new garden'. But it would also be very selfish of me not to offer to teach people at least a little of what I enjoy so much. Nothing gives me more pleasure than getting my clients involved in every aspect of the project, so that on completion, we both have a feeling of pride and satisfaction in what **we** have created together.

Gardening to de-stress

When you are relaxed, your creativity flows.

As with any task, if you take a relaxed approach, you will find that ideas come to you more readily. Perhaps you can discuss the task you are about to take on in creating a new garden with your partner or friends. Go to garden centres or open gardens and look at what is available, and what other people have done. Read gardening magazines and books, and surf the Internet looking for information and ideas. Gardening can be a wonderful form of relaxation but, as in so many areas of life, the key to success lies in the planning and preparation.

Planning – some things to consider before you start your project

- When are you going to start the job? Set a date.
- Choose the style of garden most suited to your lifestyle. Do you want a particular theme? A garden that resembles a favourite holiday destination, or an outdoor café perhaps?
- Consider colours and textures. Do you have a favourite colour?
- Incorporate areas for children or others who use the garden to enjoy and use to develop their own creativity. A play area, sandpit or cubby house for children, or a quiet bench for an elderly parent perhaps?
- Is it going to be a project that develops over time, or is it going to be an 'instant' garden makeover? Either way, you need to have a plan, so that you don't end up redoing things.

Start at the beginning. Grab a cup of tea and a writing pad and pen, sit in a quiet spot in the garden, and make a list of everything you don't like about the garden and would like to remove. Next, make a second list of all the things you do like. Finally make a list of everything you would like to see in your new garden.

**Remember: when you write your ideas down,
new ideas spring to mind.**

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Here's an example:

Plants or materials to be removed	Plants or materials to keep or introduce	Wish list
Privet and other weeds	Frangipani	New clothes line
Old brick barbecue	Gardenias	Portable barbecue
Ugly plants in the back corner near the bottlebrush tree	Grass trees	Vegetable garden
Dead shrub near the garage door	Blueberry Ash tree	Sandpit
Old clothes line	Grey coloured plants near the Blueberry Ash tree	Perfumed plants
	Plants with yellow berries and mauve flowers (need to check name)	Colourful foliage
		Tropical theme
		Dog kennel

Now that you have your list, draw a plan of how you want your new garden to look – it doesn't have to be an artist's impression, just a sketch you can follow and work on, step by step. Write out a schedule of tasks in point form. Start with the removal of unwanted plants and materials. Slowly incorporate items from your wish list. Stick to your plan, and you will be inspired as you start to see things coming to fruition.

Here's an example of a schedule of tasks:

	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5
Order a mini-skip for rubbish removal and remove: old brick barbecue, garden edging, privet and other weeds, ugly plants in back corner near bottlebrush tree, dead shrub near garage door and old clothes line	X				
Install new clothes line		X			
Build sandpit for children and dog kennel			X		
Layout new garden beds and prepare soil, make list of new plants to purchase				X	
Shop for new plants and install new plants					X

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Once you have compiled your to-do list, you need to research your plants. The following brief guide should help you with your decisions.

Delight the senses

Our brains process information via our senses, one or more of which are constantly stimulated. When I'm creating a garden, I want it to embrace you, to be **a complete garden that delights all the senses**. If ever there was an area for letting your creativity run wild, this is it.

Sight

Search for magnificent foliage plants such as bold bromeliads with their showy, audacious flowers that sit amongst patterned leaves; daring reds and exotic pinks that become more vivid when located beside contrasting crotons with their abstract, brassy markings. The bulky, cumbersome leaves of philodendrons blend beautifully in the background of a tropical garden. Layers of colour and texture create a visual work of art. Be daring when planning your creation, and make it a vision to behold.

Sound

If you wish to create a bush garden, go for bushwalks. Take in your surroundings: magpies crooning their placid, melodic tune; kookaburras perched up in trees, their unique, thunderous laughter reminding you that you share nature

with others. Eucalypts, callistemons and grevilleas will guarantee the arrival of your feathered choir, and the addition of a birdbath will provide five-star luxury accommodation to encourage regular patronage. Water features and wind chimes will add yet another dimension to your garden.

Sound often invokes other feelings. Listening to the sound of the ocean, its waves crashing with uniform regularity, reminds me of my childhood.

Smell

Gardens offer a mixture of smells, some earthy, some sweet. And we don't always have to rely on the flowers for perfume – many wonderful plants have foliage that has aromatic qualities. When selecting your plants, crush a small leaf or piece of foliage, and breathe in the aroma before making your decision.

Freshly-mown lawn provides a fresh, crisp and earthy fragrance that is familiar and associative. For the romantics, roses are an all-time favourite, providing a sensual bouquet that can be arousing and exhilarating.

Gardenias and frangipani conjure up images in our minds of a tropical island resort as they exude their heady scent.

Herbs are an excellent choice, as they are usually both fragrant and tasty. Be sure to select plants that give more than just a pleasant smell – they should make you feel good as well.

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**‘A smell perceived is a message received’
– RH Wright, *The Sense of Smell* (1982)**

Touch

Allow yourself the privilege of touch in deciphering the diverse array of plants. The smooth, glossy leaves of *Syzygium* (Lilly Pilly) provide a stunning contrast to *Stachys byzantina* (Lambs ear), popular for its silvery white woolly coating that provides the leaves with thermal insulation, protecting them from both heat and cold.

The velvety feel when you run your hands along the feathery plumes of exotic grasses that sway in the wind is quite a contrast to the textures of cacti, which protect themselves with coats of armour that can easily puncture the skin of us mere mortals.

A variety of tactile sensations can provide a welcome respite from an ever-increasing world of concrete. Plant a simple row of Mondo grass to snake along beside the hard surface of a winding pathway, or a blanket of grevilleas to spill over the edges of a planter box.

Taste

No garden is complete without the addition of edible plants. To be able to walk into your garden and pick succulent strawberries, tangy lemons, sweet mandarins, plump, juicy tomatoes, or chillies that threaten to temporarily ruin your

taste buds is a joy, and adds interest and nutritional value to your culinary exploits. Many herbs not only provide exquisite flavours, but also ingredients for various skin care treatments and natural therapies.

So there you have it. Bask in the infinite possibilities of horticultural delights until **you** discover what **delights your senses**.

Relax, reflect and enjoy

Once you've created your dream garden, you will have a place to relax, reflect, and stimulate your creativity in other areas of your life. Use your garden to unwind and de-stress, and as a place of solace.

Creativity is the key to innovation

Developing your creativity leads to more innovative ideas.

The more you create, the more innovative you become.

From a business perspective, innovation can be the key to a successful business. One of the first questions a business advisor will ask you is 'What do you have to offer that others in your industry aren't already doing?' What he or she is saying is, 'You need to always be thinking of something new, something different, that hasn't been done before'. This could be in relation to products or services. You need to have innovative ideas, otherwise you'll be left behind.

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Why would a client want to do business with you in preference to a competitor if you can't offer a better solution?

Once you've mastered your particular area of expertise, you need to always be thinking ahead, keeping up with the latest trends, and prepared to have a go at something different.

Tips for developing creativity

Remember to praise yourself. Everyone feels good when people praise them for their efforts. If you tell yourself that you are not creative, or put yourself down by saying 'I'm not good enough', or 'I'm hopeless', guess what? You will never achieve your dreams. Start by telling yourself that you are good enough, and you can do anything you want if you try.

My father always told me when I was young that just because I was a girl didn't mean that I couldn't do anything I wanted to. His words have stayed with me throughout my life, and I now know that he was right.

Here's a list to keep your creative and innovative thinking flowing:

- ☐ Be a good listener
- ☐ Have open discussions with like-minded people
- ☐ Place yourself in a space that allows your thoughts to be free
- ☐ Broaden your outlook on life and look beyond your immediate surroundings
- ☐ Mix with people from other cultures and industries
- ☐ Try to go to places you have never been to before
- ☐ Experiment with ideas
- ☐ Don't let others hinder your thoughts
- ☐ Stay positive
- ☐ Write your ideas down and clearly define them
- ☐ Research and keep up-to-date with trends in your industry
- ☐ Keep yourself fit and healthy to keep your brain fresh
- ☐ Remember that we are all creative
- ☐ Have a go!
- ☐ Embrace change

Diversity...Diversity...Diversity

Now I want you to add your own tips to my list. Think of 10 ideas or activities that will help you to think more creatively. Write them down. Go on, do it – and then refer to the list every time you feel you need a little inspiration. Remember, inspiration comes from doing things you enjoy, or being with people you love.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

**Now I am going to
ask you another
question after having read
this chapter.**

Turn the page!

So, are you a creative person?

Write your new answer here: _____

I am sure that by now you are feeling positive about your creativity and innovative skills. Remember to practise! Give yourself time to clear your thoughts, and you'll discover that you are full of great ideas. Write them down. Go on, do it – right now!

Thinking?

Thinking?

Thinking?

Thinking?

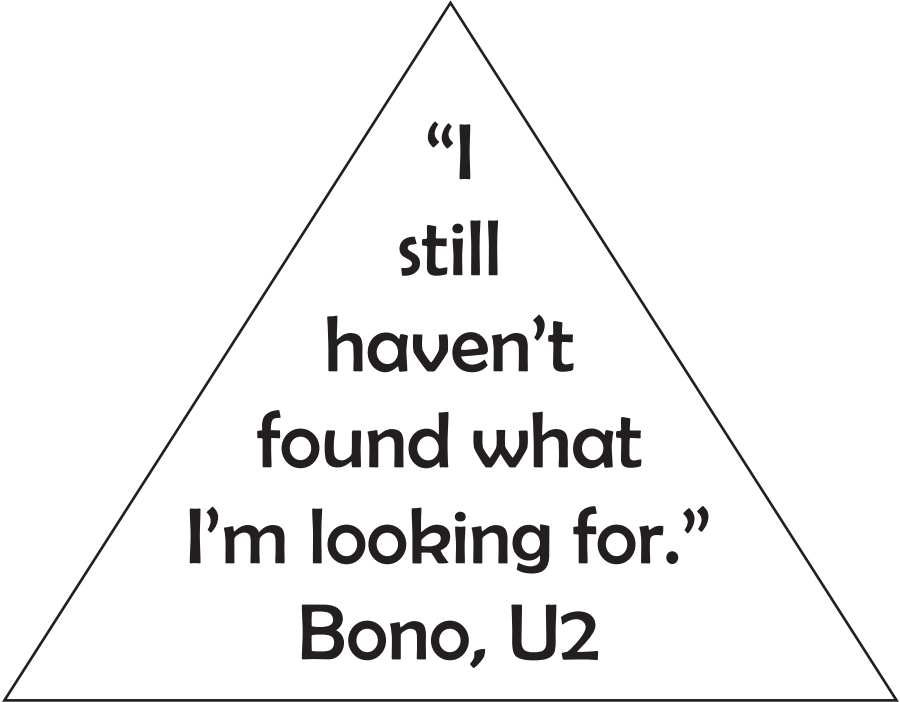
Thinking?



Thinking?

Thinking?

Thinking?



**“I
still
haven’t
found what
I’m looking for.”
Bono, U2**

Q & A

Anne-Maree Huxley

In your current role, what types of creative work do you do and how do you get to the point where lots of creative ideas start to flow? What sorts of things can get your creative juices flowing?

I wear many hats, but my primary role these days is as a change agent, business strategist and problem solver, providing leadership and education to business, government and the community as a catalyst towards sustainable development. I deliver a lot of presentations, facilitate networking and group think tanks, put together industry conferences, and develop a lot of programs to address specific issues, such as 'How do we get Australia to reduce its collective environmental footprint?'.

Fortunately, I've spent more than 20 years engaging individuals and communities, so thinking simultaneously at both the big picture and detailed levels comes naturally to me. My creative juices really start to flow when I give myself the time and space to read industry papers and attend conferences on topics that relate to the focus of my work at the time.

Being in the energy of the topic I'm working on, and hearing others' views and comments, allows me to drift off and think about my own issues. I also gain great value from networking

and hearing what others are doing. I love the late night news on the ABC, as it often covers relevant national and international issues, and because I'm relaxed and have mostly switched off from the day, it allows new thoughts to emerge on how to address particular issues.

Apart from these more business-related activities, I draw great inspiration from the movies, being in nature, driving the car, and having a shower – all things that take me out of my head and allow new ideas and inspiration to come to me. I learnt a long time ago that all the answers are there – we just need to give them the time and space to let them come in.

So chilling out and having fun – all the good things in life – provides my best inspiration. I also think the fact that I've switched off, and I'm not obsessed with anything in particular, delivers me my best creativity and inspiration.

Another key is not to limit myself. I allow myself to have really big thoughts! You can always shrink a big idea, but usually you can't enlarge a modest one – so I like to think big. I've always said it's not the size of the budget that counts, it's the size of the idea that gets results.

I should also note that when I don't give myself the time and space to develop initiatives and problem-solve, my creative mind invariably wakes me up at 3.30am to do it!

And how do I know when I'm ultimately on a winner? Once I develop the strategy or concept, I get out of my head and feel my way through it, letting my intuition and inner knowing take

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over. If they feel good, as well as logical, then I know I'm on the right track.

What is the most innovative idea, project or system you have seen in the Australian or global marketplace in the last 12 months?

My first thought was the Live 8 concerts, organized by Bono, Bob Geldof and others, to let governments know they needed to be accountable to the people. But I think former US Vice-President Al Gore's documentary on climate change, 'An Inconvenient Truth', tops the charts for me. He's been delivering the same message across America (and occasionally in other parts of the world) for some years now, but to take his presentation and leverage it by turning it into a documentary was, to me, brilliant. He's not your everyday movie star, so using his networks, his global status and scientific support to motivate society to act, to challenge the current status quo, was compelling. How often can someone have that much impact around the planet in just a few short months? And not only has he produced the third-highest rating documentary in US history, he's also training thousands of people around the world to deliver the same presentation to board rooms, universities and schools, so that everyone learns the truth about climate change, and knows what needs to be done to address it.

Climate change is, in my opinion, the greatest global issue of our time. It's responsible for increasing the incidence and severity of drought, landslides, cyclones, hurricanes, fires, rising sea levels, and the bleaching of our coral reefs – all the

events that are causing harm to our environment and damage to our communities. It's a problem that many have tried to address in the past, and yet no individual or organisation has come close to gaining the level of recognition and support that Al Gore has achieved. So it's the right strategy, with the right person at the right time. It's incremental change on a monumental scale.

Have you ever made a magnificent mistake that resulted in a great idea or opportunity for you?

Yes, there have been plenty of them – too many to mention. And the common theme in all those mistakes has been not listening to my intuition. I've since learnt how to use my intuition, and it pays dividends every time.

On a global basis, what creative and innovative minds do you admire, and why?

- ☐ Al Gore
- ☐ Bill Clinton
- ☐ Bono
- ☐ Nelson Mandela
- ☐ Sir Bob Geldof
- ☐ Bill Gates
- ☐ Jamie Oliver
- ☐ Oprah Winfrey
- ☐ Ray Anderson

Each of them in their own way is addressing national and international societal and environmental problems. They

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are the new age warriors, using their networks, their media profiles, and their passion to make a difference.

Several years ago, I opted to use the skills and resources I have to create global good. I don't have the networks and the media profile of those I've listed, but I do share the same passion. So for me, seeing these people in action, using both orthodox and unconventional methods to gain recognition and create change, spurs me on to do more.

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Q & A

Jilda Simpson

Jilda, what influenced and led to you choosing a creative course of study? What opportunities has this given you?

I never really knew why I drifted towards creative courses of study, in fact it was something that I didn't really consider that I had any particular talent for, unlike my sisters who are very talented in the music and visual design areas. I always enjoyed digital media and new technologies when I was growing up, but I never fully understood the creativity involved in the (very basic) programming and interactivity in which I was immersed.

I was a very shy girl, preferring to distance myself from my personal expression, and computers helped me do this perfectly. It was something that I felt I understood, and I spent countless hours working with it, so I could express my ideas and thoughts through that medium.

I didn't have to explain or justify this expression, because people never asked me to, which suited me fine. I used to make lots of little interactive games, and I made databases for all the books in our house as well as all the recipes and videos we had collected over the years.

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Things fell into place for me when I found that I could use these tools in my schoolwork. Making simple programs and games with school content paid off, as the countless hours spent making them translated into good marks, mainly because no-one knew *how* I was doing it, or *where* I was learning it, I believe. As a result, I got a good mark for university entrance, and went straight into new media studies in a Media and Communications course.

Studying new media at university has presented, and continues to present, many opportunities to me. I was able to continue using technology as my means of expression, and I was also encouraged and supported to express more facets of myself and my culture, which drew me out of my crippling shyness, and has served to stand me in great stead for seizing future opportunities.

I did my honours year looking at effective communication methods across Indigenous Australia, and now that I have more of an understanding of the role that education has played in my life, I am keenly involved in the promotion of education across Indigenous Australia, working at the University as Deputy Director of Nura Gili Indigenous Programs.

Your cultural background has a very rich creative foundation. Can you tell us something about it? Do you feel cross-cultural creativity has something to offer as an area for development in the future?

I am lucky that I have a very rich creative foundation in my family. I am lucky more so because I inherited a strong sense

of identity from both my father, who is a Yuwallaraay man from Walgett in North Western NSW, and my mother, who is three generations Australian, with roots in Ireland. Both continue to instil a very cohesive and harmonious identity in me, which I also share with my two sisters.

Both sides of my family celebrate creativity as *functional*, a concept that I carry very strongly with me today. Milliners, cooks, writers, fishermen and women, singers, musicians and opal miners are scattered throughout both sides of my family. Rather than having a few creative people here and there, most of my family go about their daily lives in creative ways.

Through my studies and experiences, I believe that this functional form of creativity is specifically inherent in Indigenous cultures across Australia. All the visual arts, cultural objects (or artefacts), songs, dances, games and stories, have a function, and their visual and aesthetic qualities play a large part in their particular function.

The increased aesthetic value that Western society has placed on many forms of Indigenous cultural expression continues to deny their function. To understand that a shield or a spear or even a painting was made to be used often comes as a surprise to students in my classroom. I am determined to promote the value of function in creativity, particularly in forms of Indigenous cultural expression.

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This mode of creativity is still very much alive today, and I feel proud and connected that I employ creativity in the same way. That is why I have always felt uncomfortable calling myself an artist or singer (or even creative in general), as I believe that these tags are not reflective of my original purpose or the functionality behind my actions.

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Try thinking creatively for a change

The Creative Edge

‘But I’m just not creative’

At school, at university, and at work we are encouraged to think critically – to divide, analyse and, in some cases, to judge. In scientific subjects we are asked to establish a hypothesis, conduct experiments, observe the results and determine whether the hypothesis was accurate or not. Even in many of the arts, like music, languages and history, we are asked to divide a piece of music, analyse a text, and judge a historical development.

While this is a very useful way of thinking in some contexts, it is almost the opposite of creative thinking.

Creative thinking is more about linking than dividing, it is more about synthesis than analysis, and it is more about acceptance than judgement. These are skills that are difficult to develop in a school system that needs to assess, rate and mark, so it’s not surprising that many people arrive at work thinking, ‘But I’m just not creative’.

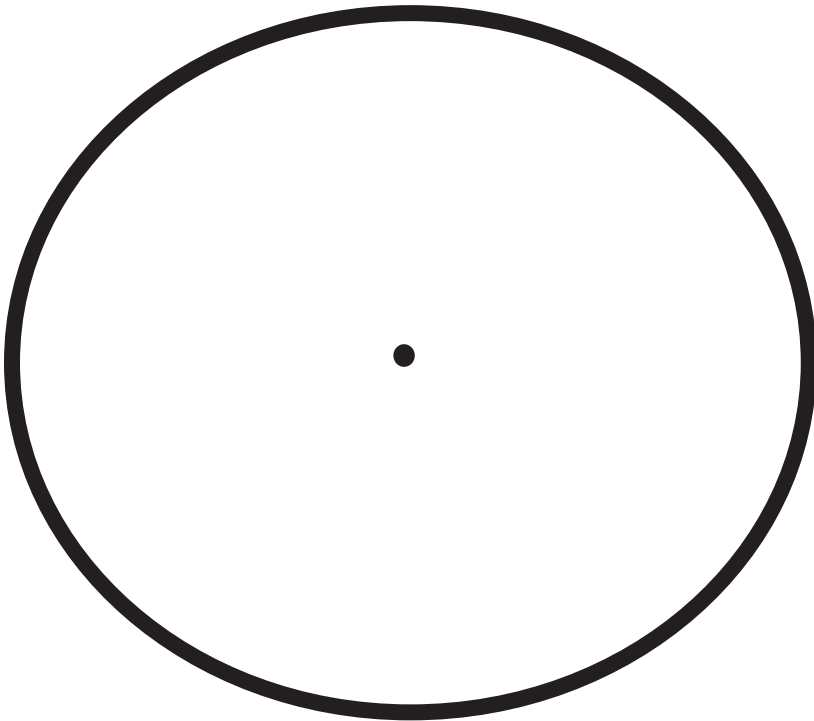
Creativity is a skill, and like any other skill you can’t expect to be able to use it well without study and, above all else, practise.

How is it that athletes become Olympians? Not by reading about how to be an Olympic athlete in a book, then getting frustrated with their under-performance the first couple of times they give it a shot, only to quit after having tried just once or twice.

In this chapter we can divide, analyse and label how creative thinkers think. It is up to you to put these techniques into practice and to stick with it long enough to be able to see their value.

Let's get started ...

For the next minute, without looking at the following page, try this quick quiz:



Reproduce this without lifting your pen off the page ...

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How did you go? Got any ideas? There are a few ideas that people usually come up with, including:

- **Fold the page** - Draw the dot in the middle, fold the paper so you can move the pen onto the back of the page and then move it to the outside to draw the circle.
- **Use a retractable pen** - Draw the dot, retract the pen, move the pen to the outside and then draw the circle.
- **Lay the pen down** - Draw the dot, lay the pen down on the page and then move it to the outside and lift the pen up and draw the circle.

There are in fact over 30 ways of reproducing the figure without lifting your pen off the page. I kid you not!

To try and work out what they are, get together with a group of people and spend 10 minutes coming up with as many ways as you can to 'reproduce this without lifting your pen off the page'.

Here are a few avenues to explore:

- Photocopy it - place your pen on the page and photocopy it
- It is not a dot on the page - it is a dead fly
- Use someone else's pen and leave your pen lying on the page

In the space below, list all the ways that you and your friends can come up with in the 10 minutes allocated. Do this before turning the page. Remember, there are over 30 ways, so you can't afford to be fussy.

The Creative Edge

How did you go this time? Did you come up with more ways than you did the first time you looked at it?

Here are more than 30 ways to 'reproduce this without lifting your pen off the page'.

- ☐ Fold the page's top left corner
- ☐ Fold the page's top right corner
- ☐ Fold the page's bottom left corner
- ☐ Fold the page's bottom right corner
- ☐ Use a retractable pen
- ☐ Use someone else's pen
- ☐ Use someone else's paper
- ☐ Use two people
- ☐ Use two hands
- ☐ Use your hand and a foot to hold a pen
- ☐ Use your hand and your mouth to hold a pen
- ☐ Use a pencil
- ☐ Use a texta
- ☐ Use a highlighter pen
- ☐ Use lipstick
- ☐ Use blood
- ☐ Photocopy it
- ☐ Take a photo
- ☐ Take a digital photo
- ☐ Scan it
- ☐ E-Mail it
- ☐ Copy it electronically
- ☐ Reproduce it in a computer program
- ☐ Hold a mirror up to it
- ☐ Write the word 'this' in running writing

- ☐ Write the words 'this without lifting your pen off the page'
- ☐ Drop the page rather than lifting the pen
- ☐ Reproduce it in sand
- ☐ Reproduce it in wood
- ☐ Reproduce it in metal
- ☐ Reproduce it in plastic
- ☐ Buy paper with a dot already on it
- ☐ Buy paper with a circle already on it
- ☐ Reproduce it in your mind

As you can clearly see, there are quite possibly infinite ways to 'reproduce this without lifting your pen off the page'. Strangely enough, it's all about creativity!!!

Now let's examine what happened as we moved through that activity, because it will give us some insights into the nature of creativity.

When you were first asked to 'try this quick quiz', chances are you thought a lot of different things. For example, you might have thought:

- ☐ It can't be done
- ☐ I know this. I've seen it before.
- ☐ I'm no good at these things.
- ☐ Oh here we go. This is one of those lateral thinking tricks.
- ☐ I don't care. Just tell me the answer.
- ☐ Okay, I'll give it a shot.

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The thing is, all these thoughts lead to, at most, just one way of solving the puzzle. Even if you've seen it before, chances are you'll remember the way you did it last time, and be satisfied with that answer.

And yet something happened to enable us to come up with over 30 ways of 'reproducing this without lifting your pen off the page'.

The Principles of Creative Thinking

What we did was employ three key principles of creativity:

- ☐ Re-set the standard
- ☐ Two heads are better than one
- ☐ Allocate time

Re-set the standard

In this activity, I told you that there were in fact over 30 ways to 'reproduce this without lifting your pen off the page'. This dramatically re-set the standard, and in so doing, forced you to re-examine the puzzle in a new light.

If I had told you that there were only three ways, you would have had less reason to re-examine the puzzle. Going from zero or one solution to three solutions is not sufficiently significant to force a re-think. The standard needed to be significantly re-set to prompt you to have a second look from as many different angles as possible.

Two heads are better than one

If someone only has one way of looking at something, we often call it tunnel vision. When we can see two positions on a problem, this often leads to a dichotomy – one position wins at the other's expense. We call a person wise when they are able to view the same issue or problem from many different perspectives.

Getting together with others has the obvious benefit of increasing the perspectives on the problem. Creative thought is thinking that produces many different perspectives. Sometimes we need two heads to help us get started.

Allocate time

In order to come up with over 30 ways, you needed to allocate time to think about nothing else other than re-examining the puzzle.

In our society, we tend to reward movement rather than thinking. People are considered productive when they are moving around the workplace with apparent purpose. People are considered unproductive if they are spotted sitting quietly, just thinking. And yet in some contexts, this could be exactly what is needed, rather than movement for movement's sake.

How to Think Creatively

So, let's assume that you have a puzzle, a problem, or an issue that requires some creative thinking. Let's also assume that you've applied the three key principles of creativity outlined above and set aside time with other people to re-set the standard.

We now need to look at some techniques that will help us to keep the creativity happening for everyone. The three techniques that we will look at are:

- ☐ Accepting the offer
- ☐ Linking anything to anything
- ☐ The Disney Pattern

Accepting The Offer

Have you ever listened to good breakfast radio, where the announcers seem able to be funny every morning?

What an amazing skill. They need to be able to come up with new material on the spur of the moment, material that has a shelf-life of one morning! How do they do this?

One thing that these exceptional announcers do is 'accept the offer'.

When they find a piece of material to use, a news item, a call from a listener, an article in the morning newspapers, they

bounce ideas off each other without blocking. They know that if they block, the material ends, and they need to look for something new. So rather than block, they 'accept the offer'.

To illustrate this technique, let's say a morning radio announcer has asked people to phone in with examples of things their parents said to them when they were growing up that made little sense. Callers tell of how their parents would say things like *'I'm going to thrash you within an inch of your life'*, *'If John put his head in the fire, would you?'* or *'I brought you into this world, and I can take you out of it'*.

If, when the announcer hears one of these phrases from a caller, they block it, they sound something like this:

'Oh, I've never heard that one. That's a good one. Okay, let's go to the next caller ...'

There's no repartee, no humour.

If, on the other hand, the announcer accepts the offer, then we start to get the humour:

Caller: *'My mum used to say "I brought you into this world and I can take you out of it."'*

Announcer: *'Ah yes. I remember my mum saying that. Now what on earth does it mean?'*

Caller: *'I'm not really sure, but it used to frighten the life out of me.'*

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Announcer: *'It sounds as though your mum was claiming some sort of legal right over whether you lived or died. So what was it like growing up in a house where you felt like your life was in someone else's hands?'*

Caller: *'Yeah, I guess you just sort of thought that mum and dad were like demi-gods.'*

Announcer: *'Demi-gods with strange powers, like cartoon characters.'* (In cartoon character voice) *'Able to know what you're doing no matter where you are, able to break a feather duster over your backside, able to take you out of this world at a moments notice ... look out for Supermum!'*

No doubt you can see that accepting the offer leads to more material, more 'lightness', if not humour, and therefore more creativity.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, creativity is more about accepting than judging.

It is very easy (because we have been trained that way) to judge ideas before they have the chance to breathe and grow. When a person, or in some cases our own self-talk, comes up with an idea, our minds seem to have a natural tendency to look for faults in the thinking, flaws in the logic, to judge. This takes little or no skill, because when an idea is young, it generally has many flaws, so spotting them is easy.

We need to be able to keep our mind in check, and we will look at ways to do this shortly. We also need to refrain from

saying anything that could kill an idea until we have taken the time to think critically. To do this, we need to use the language of acceptance in preference to the language of blocking and stopping.

Words that block and stop	Words that accept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> But ... <input type="checkbox"/> Not a bad idea, but ... <input type="checkbox"/> We don't usually do it that way you know <input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive ... <input type="checkbox"/> We tried that last year ... <input type="checkbox"/> Too theoretical, needs more research ... <input type="checkbox"/> It's against our policy ... <input type="checkbox"/> Don't be stupid ... <input type="checkbox"/> You don't understand our problem ... <input type="checkbox"/> Let's be practical ... <input type="checkbox"/> Let's form a committee ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> And <input type="checkbox"/> Yes ...and ... <input type="checkbox"/> What I like about that is... <input type="checkbox"/> That's clever, particularly if we add ... <input type="checkbox"/> Repeating what the previous speaker has said before adding your idea <input type="checkbox"/> What would it be like if we included ... <input type="checkbox"/> I love how that incorporates ... <input type="checkbox"/> And then we could ... <input type="checkbox"/> What that leads to is ...

Linking Anything to Anything

If all we do is accept the offer, we'll sound like a parrot, which of course is not creative. So, once we've accepted the offer, we need to add something to it – to develop the idea before

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passing it on. A technique that works well here is to ‘link anything to anything’.

Have you ever had an experience whereby you have seen or heard two things linked together for the first time, and just seeing or hearing that connection has caused an explosion of thinking or emotion?

I was reading an article in a paper recently about autopsies of societies. I know – I’m a nerd! I’ve been a nerd for long enough now to not only not care about it, but to actually be comfortable with it. The point is, I know what an autopsy is, and I know what a society is, but I have never seen or used those two words together before. When I first saw them used together, I experienced a small explosion of thought and excitement at what, to me, was a new field of study. Wow, the study of why societies had failed – of what caused their ‘death’.

‘The time has come’, the walrus said, ‘to talk of many things: of shoes and ships and sealing wax, of cabbages and kings’. The linking of things that have not been linked together before is an example of creativity. Ancient civilisations mixed copper, which is a soft metal, and tin, which is even softer, to create bronze, a hard metal. Gutenberg combined the wine press and the coin punch to create the printing press.

This is a skill that takes practise and persistence. Just because you combine two things does not necessarily mean you will have a winner on your hands.

Often, you will come up with nonsense, but every now and again, amid the nonsense, there will be one combination that is what you are looking for, and perhaps far more than you expected.

As well as practise and persistence, it also takes an ability to play with your idea before you decide whether to keep or discard it. For example, I opened the dictionary twice to find two words to link together. The first word I found was 'indemnity', and the second word I found was 'continent'.

Rather than finding reasons not to link the two words together, the secret is to 'accept the offer' and 'link anything to anything.' After playing with the two words for five minutes, I came up with the following ideas:

- ***The Continent free of Indemnity*** – Late in the 21st century a growing number of people were becoming disillusioned with a legal system that seemed to focus on the apportionment of blame at the expense of personal responsibility. These people banded together and moved to a small continent where indemnity was outlawed, the advantages being that there were no insurance premiums, no whingeing, no blaming and, best of all, no lawyers. The disadvantage was that the continent was populated by people who didn't think before they acted and as a result, their foreign affairs department was a global embarrassment. I think there's a book in this!

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- ***Continental Indemnity*** – A new insurance product aimed at those in danger of being sued when their continent causes an earthquake that affects a neighbouring continent. Do you live near a fault line? Avoid being caught short by the next earthquake. Not only could you lose your own house, but people in neighbouring continents could sue you for the loss of their houses. For peace of mind, contact Continental Indemnity today.

Take the issue you are working on and define it using a variety of words. Then select one word at random from a dictionary, and link it to your definition. Play with these words for a few minutes, linking them in all possible combinations, and see what you come up with.

The Disney Pattern

If you ever watched 'The Wonderful World of Disney' when you were growing up, you might remember seeing a short film on the making of 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs'. It is worth a look from a creativity point of view, as it documents how one of the world's most creative people actually created things.

You will notice that, as well as an enormous amount of persistence, there were three distinct stages to Walt Disney's creative process. This has come to be known as 'The Disney Pattern', and is now used by people to create everything from music, literature and art through to problem-solving and decision-making in the business world.

The three stages in The Disney Pattern are:

Dreaming

Preferably done in a small group, this involves a freewheeling brainstorming session to come up with all possible ideas, no matter how impractical they might seem at first. It's important to push the group past the first 'dead spot', as great ideas often tend to emerge just after that point.

Avoid evaluation during this phase, and appoint one group member as a facilitator to keep the brainstorming going and to regularly review the current position to stimulate movement past any 'dead spots'. This can be done by using the principles of creativity we identified earlier:

- ☐ Re-set the standard
- ☐ Two heads are better than one
- ☐ Allocate time

Grouping

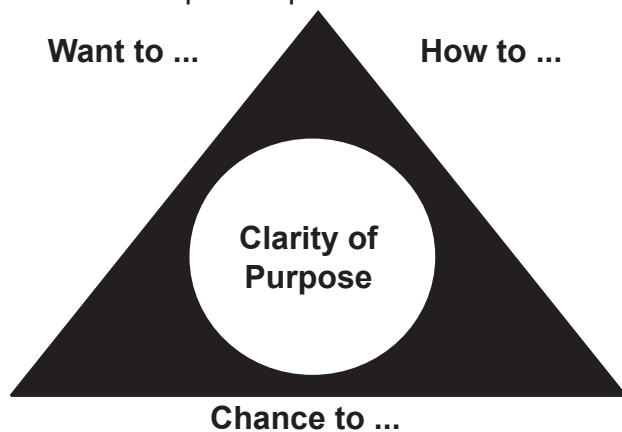
This stage involves simply grouping similar ideas together, and inviting the team to contribute to structuring some of these ideas and thinking them through by asking them, 'Realistically, what will we have to do to get this one off the ground?' This will help to clarify, structure and 'chunk' the ideas.

Formatting

Now we can evaluate what will work and what won't. The formatting phase allows reasoned debate about what might be feasible and what isn't – it is NOT an opportunity to tear apart all the ideas. It is also the stage where the information is sequenced. Think of this stage as the objective evaluator, unattached to any one idea, and able to see flaws and gaps in the thinking.

Creative Thinking is Only the Start

Think and Grow Rich, by Napoleon Hill, is widely acknowledged as a classic in management literature. In this astounding book, Hill interviews some of the most exceptional people in history such as Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, and Alexander Graham Bell. The combined experiences of these people point to the idea that there are four primary components of exceptional performance.



Want to... the passion

One of the requirements for achieving significant results is that you need to *want to* – with a passion.

I can understand that you might be thinking, 'So far, so good. This is easy. I want to be rich. I want to have money to burn. And make no mistake Rod, I want it with a passion'.

The thing is, you have to 'want to' enough to do whatever it takes to create that wealth. Many of us want to do or have or be all sorts of things, but not enough to actually take the action necessary.

I know people who have attended numerous 'Wealth Creation' seminars - you know the ones. They're run by people who claim that only a couple of years ago they were destitute and homeless, living on the street and eating out of bins. Today, thanks to the secrets they're about to share with you, they're financially free, own numerous properties, cars and boats, and are right up there competing with Warren Buffett and Bill Gates for the title of world's richest individual.

Don't get me wrong – the information that they provide in most of these seminars will increase your wealth... but only if you take action! And that's the point. People's passion, people's 'want to', often runs out when the hard yards begin, when they have to back their own judgement, when they have to take risks!

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We might hear things like, 'I'll invest in property one day, but not just yet. The market is over-inflated', or 'Never again. I bought a property once, but I got ripped off and the tenants ruined my investment', or 'I'll buy some shares in about six months time. I think the market is headed for a correction, and I want to buy at the bottom', or 'I want to buy some shares, but I need to do some more research on the companies before I actually take the plunge'.

Those people obviously do not 'want to' enough.

How to... the plan

Unfortunately, just having the passion isn't enough in and of itself. Suppose you needed heart surgery immediately. Would you hand the scalpel to your partner or dear friend? Unless they happened to be a heart surgeon, the answer is probably a resounding 'No!'

They might want to see you well. They might want to see you well with a passion. Sadly however, they are missing the 'how to' – the plan.

In order to produce exceptional results, you will need sufficient knowledge, skill, and expertise.

Chance to... the persistence

I once participated in a training program run by one of Australia's best corporate trainers, Colin James. As well as

being an exceptional trainer, Colin is an accomplished artist. He was able to select someone from the audience and, Rolf Harris-like, draw a caricature of them that was instantly recognisable to others in the room. Very clever.

During a break, I told Colin that I really admired his drawing ability, and that I had always wanted to draw like that.

'No you haven't, Rod', he replied.

'What do you mean?' I asked.

'You haven't always wanted to draw like that. If you really wanted to draw like that, you would have enrolled in an art class at your local TAFE, and then you would have set aside three hours a night, three nights a week to practise. If you'd done that, you'd be able to draw every bit as well as I can.'

It's true. The TAFE course is obviously the 'how to'. The 'want to' is the passion and in this case, was obviously insufficient for me to take the necessary action. The 'chance to' was the persistence: the time spent practising the newly acquired skills.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, if you do not allocate the necessary resources, time, people, etc, to the process of creativity, it will not happen.

We have talked about the 'want to', the 'how to' and the 'chance to', but the component that we have not yet discussed is...

Clarity of purpose... the direction

Significant vision always precedes significant results. There are many examples of the application of this principle. Viktor Frankl wrote of his experiences in Nazi concentration camps during World War II in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*.

What he noticed from his experiences, both in the concentration camps and later as a psychologist, is that the people who survive great stress and tragedy in their lives, the people who have left a mark on this earth, are not necessarily the strongest, the richest or even the fittest. They are those who have something significant that they are yet to achieve. They are not ready to die, they are not ready to give in, they have not completed their 'mission here on earth', their *raison d'être*.

Purpose is powerful.

If you looked directly at a 25-watt light bulb, you would not do any real damage to your eye. If you looked directly at a 25-watt laser beam, you could blind yourself. Why? What is the difference? Both emit 25 watts of energy.

The difference is, of course, that the laser beam is concentrated energy. It is focused on one point, while the light bulb's energy is diffused in every direction.

A complete definition of creativity encompasses two elements: generation of ideas, and completion.

In this chapter, we have discussed how to generate ideas. I would suggest to you that this is only the beginning.

Creativity is not complete until the idea becomes a reality.

Generating ideas is a common experience. Every day, people around the globe come up with ideas. Completion, by itself, is also a common activity. Every day people all around the world finish activities they have started. When the two are combined however, when a new idea is acted on to the point where it becomes reality – that is creativity.

**“I think all of
us have a need
to be creative.
For some, the drums
beat a little louder than
for others. But I think
everybody needs to be
creative in some way.
And I think most
people are.”
Mel Gibson**

Q & A

Kim McGuinness

Kim, the concept of www.networkcentral.com.au is very innovative, and reflects your own creativity in creating something that was very different to what was already in the marketplace. When you come up with a new concept, what comes first in your mind?

They say that necessity is the mother of invention, and it was no different in the case of Network Central. The idea was spawned while I was in hospital giving birth to my second child. The realisation dawned on me that there must be others in the same situation as myself, trying to juggle everything, and surely there were some business benefits to be obtained through recognising the changing demographic of our society.

The two main considerations are to look at the market you are targeting, and study the changes within that market, and then see what can be achieved by addressing those changes, or to look at a better way of doing something that is already being done.

Who are some creative people that you admire on a global basis?

Sir Richard Branson is a constant innovator who manages to weave his brand and brand message into everything he does.

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He's not afraid to take a calculated risk, either.

Dr Fiona Wood is an amazing individual with an incredibly down-to-earth and warm nature. This is a woman who is not afraid to take an idea past the initial thought stage, and drive it to fruition. Determination and belief are paramount in the creation of new ideas, and Dr Wood has both these qualities in abundance.

What are some of the most innovative things you are seeing in the marketplace?

The online delivery of education is fabulous, in my opinion. Bringing quality education and networking to areas that normally have no access, or to people who would otherwise have no time to study, is wonderful for businesses, adults and children. I also think the innovative water tanks that are coming on the market are excellent, and address a critical need in today's society. Hopefully, we can get to a point where they are a fashion accessory for every backyard!

Do you ever worry that, in coming up with very different ideas, others will steal your ideas?

People will always try to steal your ideas, but as long as we breathe the same air, there is truly enough out there for everyone. The secret is to always be the best, and to protect your intellectual property through the use of patents and trademarks.

What plans do you have on the drawing board for your individual businesses?

There are many things on the drawing board but I'm particularly focusing on leveraging and improving the existing programs within each section of the network in the coming year. We have launched a number of new programs over the last 12 months, so we are putting the finishing touches to these. We are also launching 2 new programs in 2007.

**Kim McGuinness is the
Managing Director of Network Central, a
first-class business network for people with a
life. For more information, go to
www.networkcentral.com.au or
call 1300 667 075**

“If you look at the space between, if you look at the accidental pile of books, if I feel like I’m stuck, and I don’t know where to move, I just go to a museum and look at paintings, it takes the clouds away, makes everything look good.”

**Frank Gehry
(designed Guggenheim
Museum Bilbao)**

Q & A

Dr Jackie Holt

In your current role, what types of creative work do you do, and how do you get to the point where lots of creative ideas start to flow? What sorts of things can get your creative juices flowing?

The major types of creative work I do are writing (mainly non-fiction) and development of training materials, workshops and presentations. I am also working on a proposal for a documentary.

My major way of getting the creative juices flowing is just to start writing – boring I know, but action precedes motivation, and just going through the basics, such as setting up the file, gathering my materials, etc., can put me into the right mind-set. When I am really stuck though, the best thing I can do is to go for a brief stroll, and try not to think about the project at all.

There is a famous experiment involving a film of a group of people playing basketball. In the middle of the game, a man in a gorilla suit walks across the court. Many people, when they watch the footage, especially if they have been told to focus on the number of passes made, completely miss the gorilla. When we focus on one area, we often miss the ‘gorillas’ of opportunity.

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What is the most innovative idea, project or system you have seen in the Australian or global marketplace in the last 12 months?

I am a fan of simple and sustainable innovations. On the ABC science show Catalyst, I saw an excellent idea, developed by engineering graduate and PhD candidate Dominic Dowling, for the design of earthquake-proof housing in El Salvador. The design and materials had to be simple, cheap and able to be built by the locals, using local material. It was very successful.

I also like the 'Incubator' model for supporting new businesses – they have been around for a while, but have recently started to focus on support for knowledge-based businesses. A number of universities have them, and they have been very successful.

Have you ever made a magnificent mistake that resulted in a great idea or opportunity for you?

If you learn by your mistakes, I must be one of the smartest women around! I once ran a workshop that ended up losing quite a bit of money because I had marketed it poorly. I got 'conned' into a large advertising campaign that was completely inappropriate but, in my naivety, sounded like a good idea at the time. Although only a small number turned up (about 20 instead of the anticipated 120), and despite being told to cut my losses and postpone the workshop, I went ahead and ran it. In the course of the workshop, I met a lady who loved my work, and introduced me to a key contact. That meeting resulted in a large-scale 18-month research project that

contained a number of innovative strategies, and became the springboard for a large amount of my current work.

On a global basis, what creative and innovative minds do you admire, and why?

Authors Ira Matathia and Marian Salzman, who wrote *Next: Trends for the future*. Their book opened my eyes to possible social and economic trends, especially the increased need for the personal services industry.

Social commentator Clive Hamilton, who wrote *Affluenza: when too much is never enough*, about the effects of over-consumption and its impact on Australian society.

My husband. He and several friends created the CareFlight helicopter rescue service one afternoon on the back of a serviette. Their belief in, and passion for, the concept saw it emerge to become the world-class service it is today.

**Have you ever wondered
whether our culture of working long hours
is good for our health or for our businesses? Dr
Jackie Holt has, and now Jackie teaches individuals
and organisations how to turn the rhetoric of work/
life balance into reality. She can be contacted at
www.equibrado.com.au.**

**“You have to
be creative to do
science. Otherwise
you’re just repeating
tired old formulas. You
aren’t doing anything
new.”**

**Professor Stephen
Hawking, scientist**

The top ten inhibitors in mental mindsets:

**how to enhance your
ability to think creatively**

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My teaching in design, management, and creative thinking generates an interesting mix of different inputs and integrated connections. The degree that we offer in the School of Design Studies at UNSW is multi-disciplinary, and we increasingly see shifts in the way the world works, which support the idea of this type of broader educational approach in a number of different industries and businesses. I research and apply creative thinking processes in the courses I write and teach, and people often ask, *“How can I be more creative?”* There are books that suggest techniques and strategies to facilitate an answer to this question, but I have achieved the best results and applied outcomes by turning the question around to *“What stops you from being more creative?”* I believe that the balance between what we do to enhance creative thinking, and what we do (often subconsciously) to inhibit it, needs to be more fully explored. So, what are the Top Ten Inhibitors to Creative Thinking - what might be holding you back?

- One common misconception is that we should be **Looking for the Right Answer** to a question. Have you ever been in a meeting or group of people where someone has said, “I think the right answer here is...?” The answers you get often depend on the questions you ask. A good example of this is in the design of the flanged wheel. Hundreds of thousands of kilometres of railroad tracks were laid with a groove to fit the train wheels before someone thought to turn the question around from “How can we make the tracks safer for the wheels?” to “How can we make the wheels stay on the tracks?” The design of the flanged wheel, with an indented, lipped edge which gripped the track,

revolutionised the transportation industry in its day, and saved millions of dollars in track maintenance costs. It's much easier to repair the wheels of trains in a maintenance workshop than it is to find a small defect on the track somewhere out in the desert! Bruce Mau, in his article *An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth*, suggested that we should learn to 'capture accidents' - the wrong answer is the right answer in search of a different question. Breakthroughs also come from asking new questions, not debating existing solutions. They come from exploring the things we accept as 'givens'.

- As adults we often find ourselves **Admiring Logical Approaches**, and saying 'That's not logical' is usually meant as a criticism. However, history is rich with the stories of creative people who have done the opposite of what seemed to be logical at the time, with remarkable results. One example is the development of the vaccine for polio. Think about it – it's not logical to inject someone with the disease you are trying to protect them against, is it? I often hear people in management express the need to 'raise the bar higher' in terms of standards, or expectations, or profit margins. In order to jump higher in today's world we need to think differently and more creatively, like Dick Fosbury in the 1968 Olympics. Instead of trying to jump over the bar in the standard Western Roll style, he invented what came to be known as the Fosbury Flop, turning his back on the bar as he jumped, and landing on his shoulders. This enabled him to jump higher than anyone had ever jumped in history. Reverse thinking, and the

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use of metaphors, are excellent tools to encourage 'soft' thinking. One favourite metaphor is my concept that *multi-tasking in our society is like junk food for the brain*. I prefer not to own a mobile phone, I restrict email time, and I actively make opportunities to just be and think, fully and clearly, in my studio space. If we look at the personal traits, surrounding environments, and processes used by famous creative thinkers, uninterrupted time was critical to their ability to produce what they did in terms of new ideas. Einstein developed the theory of relativity by daydreaming he was riding on a beam of light. He was also famous for not being able to remember his own phone number, because he thought it was superfluous information.

Do you have any mental clutter from which you could free yourself, to allow more time to apply creative thinking to new or different questions?

Creativity and innovative thinking are not device-dependent.

- Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci and Thomas Edison all had written rules for work processes, and being systematic in our thinking can certainly be beneficial. But they did something even more interesting. They deliberately avoided **Following Rules**, and broke out of thought patterns, processes, approaches, habits, and systems of learning. Think of the number of things you do each day out of habit, without conscious observation or thought.

What if, for one week, you did the opposite of the things you're used to doing? Patterns become familiar and hard to break, even in the way we choose to speak to loved ones, the food we eat, and the sections of the bookshop we frequent. Amazon.com recommends new books to its readers based on the knowledge that people usually buy the same or similar types of books. Prove them wrong! Edison holds the record for the most patents ever awarded to a human being - 1,093 - and he used to 'test' the suitability of potential employees by offering them a bowl of soup. If they salted the soup before tasting it, they were eliminated from consideration, because Edison didn't have time for people who assumed they knew about something before testing it first. He needed people who paid attention to their surroundings, and people who asked questions with an open frame of mind.

***Creative thinkers focus more on how to think
than what to think,***

and they are not ruled by processes, they only use them as a guide. Michael Michalko, who wrote *Cracking Creativity*, says that 'If you change the way you look at things, then the things you look at change'.

- As well as following rules, admiring logical approaches, and looking for right answers, another inhibitor to creative thinking is the need to **Be Practical**. When Boeing decided to design and manufacture the New Generation 737 aircraft in 2004, it would have been

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more practical for them to stick to what they knew worked in terms of tried and true processes. However being practical was not going to give them a definitive business edge - it would have been a predictable process and outcome. Instead, Boeing joined with their architectural firm NBBJ and created a democratic workplace where blue-collar and white-collar employees worked together. The new workplace was based on the concept of collaboration, and focussed on the end product they were collectively manufacturing, rather than on the process and hierarchy. They decreased unit costs, shortened problem-resolution times, and reduced final assembly flow days by 50 percent. Cultural transformation can occur when practical reasoning is set to one side, and the question 'What if...?' is used instead to cultivate and encourage people to use their imaginations. Combine the answer to that question with the answer to another question,

'Why do we do it this way?',

and the resulting effect can be even stronger.

- The fifth inhibitor is our need to **Avoid Ambiguity** and to often clarify things too quickly. Sometimes, one step back can lead to two new steps forward, in a different and more creative direction. The famous Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi was disabled by rheumatoid arthritis as a child, and it is thought that his ability to really look at things, and ask:

‘What else might that be?’

arose from long periods of enforced inactivity, during which he would observe his surroundings closely, and draw what he saw. Later in life, in his inspired designs for the Barcelona Cathedral, he hung chains, suspended weights from those chains, and then inverted the curve to create sweeping arches which did not require buttress support. He also developed a new cement, and was a noted experimenter who embraced new processes. Try to look at something in a deliberately ambiguous way, and think what else it might be - set out to challenge your assumptions with opposite views. Gaudi was not the only famous thinker to turn adversity into opportunity. *New Scientist* has published an analysis suggesting that Einstein had Asperger’s Syndrome. Not only was Edison hearing-impaired, he couldn’t read until the age of 12, and also suffered from diabetes. There are a number of noted and very creative blind musicians and singers, among them Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles and Andrea Bocelli. When things seem challenging to us in our own lives, we could do well to remember the words of Einstein:

‘In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity’.

Sometimes what others see as a disadvantage or disability can create focus and build redefined strengths in other creative areas. Resilience and ambiguity in combination make for more unique potential outcomes.

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The real challenge is not just to acknowledge the potential for change, but to act on it.

- Number six on our list is one of my favourites – **Don't Make Mistakes** – because it challenges our very upbringing. We are trained from an early age to seek perfection and successful outcomes, not failure, and yet creative thinkers often describe failure as one of the best ways they know to generate new ideas – if they are paying attention! Many of us have used the oil-based spray WD40 to ease a squeaking door or loosen a rusted screw. The name came from an ironic joke by the developers of the product. They had conducted 39 unsuccessful experiments, and when they finally succeeded, they acknowledged the long, failure-fuelled process and how many attempts it had taken them before they got it right – WD40. Edison spent more than two years, and failed more than two-hundred times, to make a light globe that worked. In the process, he registered new patents for inventions from the 'failed' experiments, and persisted in refining the end result. While looking for something else, Marie Curie discovered radium, which took a further four years to isolate and 'prove'. Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin by chance, and Christopher Columbus was actually looking for India when he discovered the New World! There are two benefits relating to failure – you learn what doesn't work, and it gives you the opportunity to try a new approach, strengthening your 'risk muscles' in the process.

- If you give a child a cardboard box to play with, their imagination takes flight - it becomes a home, a boat, a spaceship, or a turtle shell. Show an adult the same thing, and ask them what it is, and they will look at you strangely and tell you it is a cardboard box, because grown-ups see what is obvious, not imagined, and often think that **Play is Frivolous**. However, one of the outcomes of play is fun – one of the most powerful motivators to the brain in seeing new opportunities and connections. It would have been interesting to have been an observer in the meeting where the management of the wine producers Thierry and Guy heard the pitch to call their new French Chardonnay 'Fat Bastard'. Instead of dismissing the idea, they saw the humour as a distinct advantage, and within six years the wine was an international bestseller. Everyone could remember its name... 'I need a bottle of chardonnay – have you got a Fat Bastard?'...which gave it a market advantage. When I introduce myself to a new group of students, I like to read them my list of the Top Ten Stupidest Things I've Done (and it's strange, I always seem to be updating it!). I like to call it the 'Reality' versus the 'Image' of my CV. The students not only get to have a good laugh at my mistakes, they can see that humour allows for a different point of view. If we have learnt from our mistakes, it is good to be honest and share them with each other, rather than hiding them away as a guilty secret, a sign of our supposed imperfections. David Letterman uses this to good effect on his TV show when he polls the audience for a Top Ten list, and then reads it back to them. In the book *High*

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Fidelity, by Nick Hornby, the main character creates Top Five lists of reasons and rankings for all sorts of different challenges in his life. The introductory exercise in my online Creative Thinking Processes course is based on that idea.

- **That's Not My Area** is another mind-set which can prevent people from being creative. We allow ourselves to be labelled and pigeonholed into areas of expertise. The wider and more diverse your knowledge base, the more places from which you will be able to draw inspiration. Consider the power of analogy, as similar problems to yours may have been previously solved in other areas – and consider researching famous creative people and their character traits, processes and environments. In the 1800s, the great British engineer Marc Brunel was working on reinforcing the hulls of ships, and protecting them against destruction by shipworm. He closely observed how the shipworm's valves enabled it to tunnel through wood, while at the same time protecting it from being crushed by the swelling timber. This gave Brunel an idea that led to him designing the first framework, like a shell made from iron, which allowed the construction of a tunnel under the Thames. This was the world's first tunnel running beneath a navigable river, and it revolutionised the design of roadways and cities. There are many other examples of bio-mimicry being used to advance creative new ideas: new washable paint was developed by observing the non-stick surface of lotus plants. In 1948, the Swiss engineer George de Mestral was walking

his dog when he noticed how Burdock seeds or burrs clung to the dog's fur. He found that they did so by the use of microscopic hooks, and this led to the invention of Velcro. Analysts are predicting that bio-mimicry will be as great a force for creative change in our era as the Industrial Revolution and Information Age were in previous generations.

- Sometimes we resist making original suggestions in case we end up looking silly, and so **Don't Be Foolish** is our ninth inhibitor. Brainstorming can be an effective creativity-enhancer, as long as people in a group make sure they set their 'stupid monitor' aside during the process. Being overly defensive in the face of constructive criticism can also inhibit us from developing and refining our ideas. Happily, the man who founded Federal Express, Fred Smith, was not one to be put off easily. It is said that his Yale University Professor wrote, in response to Fred's paper which originally proposed the idea of a reliable overnight delivery service, 'The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a 'C' grade, the idea must be feasible'. I like to tell my students this story because I think our society puts too much emphasis on marks and grades, which are not outcomes in themselves - a degree is just a step on a journey.

Three commonly-described blockages to our ability to change our behaviours are distractions, excuses and fear - and we can develop stronger creative approaches if we don't fear appearing foolish.

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There are risks associated with change, but it is important not to build them up in our minds into something they are not. Some years ago I white-water rafted the Zambezi River in Africa, and our guide joked about our ‘white-knuckle death-grip’ on the ropes on the sides of the raft. I think of him, sometimes, when I notice my white knuckles gripping the steering wheel of my car as I remember making a mistake in a presentation, or saying something silly to a colleague. Then I consciously relax my grip and say to myself loosen up, no-one is perfect, and tomorrow is another day.

- The final inhibitor is one I frequently come across in my artistic practice, as well as in my creativity teaching. At one of my exhibitions of artwork, a friend came up to me and said, “*You’re so lucky you can draw like that*”. Luck, of course had nothing to do with it, and although I would love to concoct a magic creativity pill, a lot of what is required in innovative thinking is good old-fashioned hard work. I did life drawing every Wednesday morning at Glasgow School of Art for four years, and I only have three drawings that I think are any good to show for it. All the countless others were merely stages in a process of becoming – and although the end sometimes seems in sight, it is never quite where (or what) you would like it to be. I know from observation that friends who are ‘musical’ or ‘writers’ or ‘creative’ work hard every day to perfect their craft and polish their skills. My favourite quote from Henry Ford, inventor of the motorcar, is ‘If I had asked my customers what they wanted, they would have said a faster horse’.

***As creative thinkers, we have to imagine
the unimagined and, most importantly,
believe that we can change
things for the better.***

So our final mindset to acknowledge, and then resist, is **I'm Not Creative**. A study showed that 'The creative people thought that they were creative, while the less creative people didn't think they were creative'. Henry Ford put it differently when he said that: 'If you think you can do a thing or think you can't, you're right'. My favourite book about the role our attitudes play in holding us back or letting us run free is *Stumbling on Happiness*, by Daniel Gilbert. Now there is a man who has found the balance between laughter and learning, and has polished it to perfection in his writing through years of hard work and insights derived from careful observations. He pays attention to the things around him, and asks different questions.

In conclusion, when we think of 'aha!' moments, or new creative ideas, we often use the symbol of a light globe being turned on. The story of light through history can also be used as a metaphor to show what is possible when people are not constrained by their inhibitions. Millennia ago, humans observed what happened when lightning struck trees, and they made a connection between sparks from burning trees, and the sparks that were created when they crafted their stone flints and tools. From that and other associations, fire was controlled, and caves were able to be lit. The charcoal created by burning torches and fires was used to make the first marks

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on cave walls. Further on in time, when Edison struggled with failure, and then succeeded in creating the first light globe, he provided a safer alternative to candles and lamps, and created not only a new product, but also a new industry.

Creativity fuels innovation, and it can do more than make the world seem like a brighter place. My son was recently in hospital overnight, and while he was sleeping, a nurse came into his room to check on the monitors. She took an object out of her pocket, and cracked and shook it. I asked her what it was. As the semi-darkness was suddenly lit by a diffused glow, she whispered, *"It's a glow stick. It's supposed to be a toy, but we use it here at the hospital because the light is strong enough to read the instruments by, it doesn't need batteries, and it lasts for eight hours"*. This is a great example of a creative (new) idea being used in an innovative (unforeseen) way.

In September 2006 I read a newspaper story about two tourists who had been spotted drifting in the ocean at night by the crew of a rescue helicopter, four hours after they had been reported missing by their dive boat. They were both carrying glow sticks, which helped the crew spot them. In May 2006, glow sticks were also used in the Beaconsfield mine rescue, when they were sent in to the trapped miners to provide them with light during their ordeal. The light of torches is directed and not diffused, so glow sticks were thought to be the best solution in a situation where non-shadowing light was needed. So a nurse, divers and miners all used glow sticks in innovative and unanticipated ways - not bad work in the world for a child's toy.

Sometimes when we create or apply something new, it can take us to places, and protect us in ways, we never imagined.

We have lots of good ideas, every day. We need to pay attention to our environments by quietening our busy minds and lives to achieve a new kind of focus and sense of possibility. If you think of your daily ideas as seeds, some may fall on unfertile ground, some may require a lengthy gestation period before they finally sprout (the idea whose time has finally come), and some may need to be looked after with extra care in order to grow stronger. The least we can do is to weed the gardens of our minds, to clear away the inhibitors of our seeding ideas, and give them the best possible chance to live and bloom.

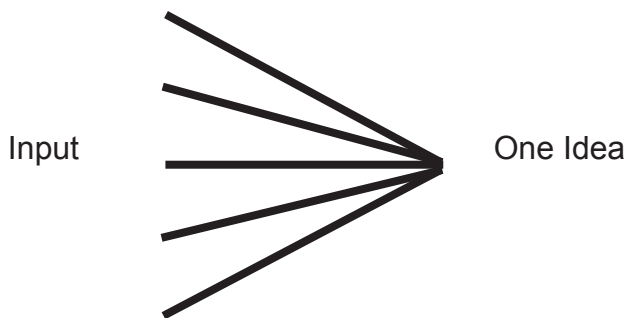
For anyone who feels they have lost their creative spark ...

I would suggest that they observe more closely what is around them, and try to diversify their thinking beyond their usual boundaries. That is one of the reasons why holidays are so good for us – we are exposed to new things and new people and, most importantly, we shake our habits for a while.

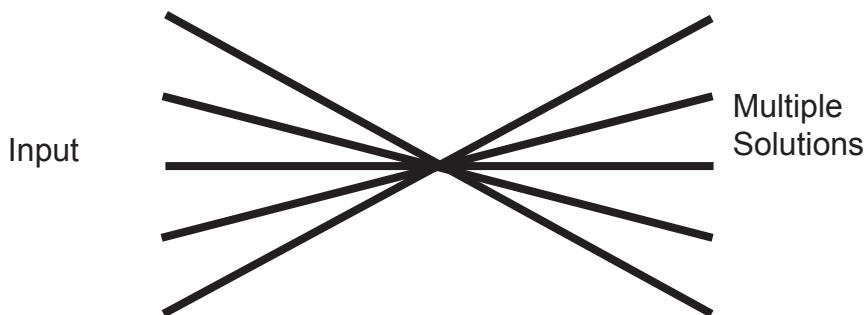
J.P. Guilford wrote about drawing a distinction between convergent and divergent thinking, and the graphic artist Charles Santoso and I designed a model to describe it:

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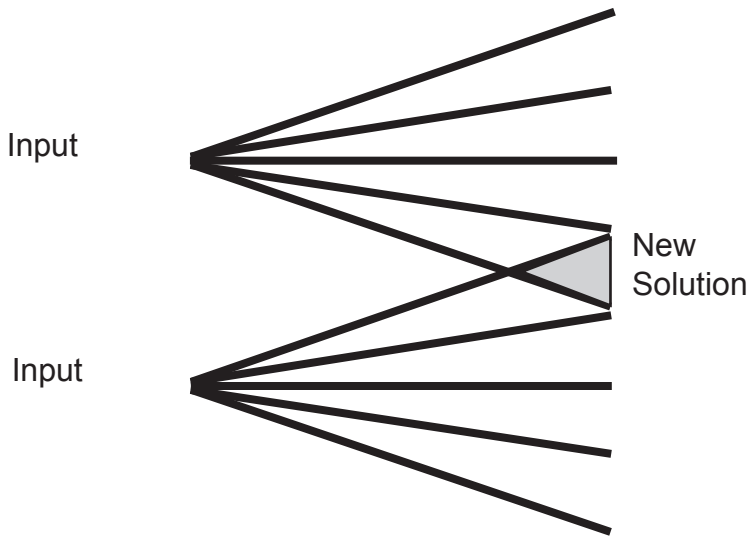
Convergent thinking involves aiming for a single, correct solution to a problem and, in my experience, this is the way most people tend to work:



Divergent thinking involves creative generation of multiple answers to a set problem, and deliberately setting out to synthesise input or information to come up with lots of ideas can help when you get stuck:



I have researched people's working processes in the film, design and engineering industries, and have noticed a further stage to this model, particularly when people work in teams. When two people combine their divergent thinking, new and unforeseen outcomes can arise:



One example of this occurred in the pre-production of Episodes 1, 2 and 3 of the Star Wars movies. I was lucky enough to visit Skywalker Ranch and Industrial Light and Magic, and Iain McCaig, the concept artist who designed Darth Maul, told me an interesting story. In his drawing, he had imagined feathers coming out of the head of the character, but when the costume designer made up the pieces, she read the drawing as small horns. Iain said that when he saw it, he was about to say it was a mistake, but he took a second look,

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and decided it looked better that way. We can deliberately set out to do this by modelling our own working processes. It sounds like a contradiction, to suggest that you should be more analytical when trying to be creative, but I don't see this as locking things down in structures – it is about learning to pay attention to everything, and asking different questions of yourself.

**Associate Professor
Emma Robertson lectures in the
School of Design Studies, UNSW. She is a
practising artist and designer who researches
memory, mapping and creative thinking. Emma
recently won a prize in the 5th International Biennale
of Drawing in Europe. She can be contacted at
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“Creativity that’s pure chaos can be confusing, but somehow if you combine the beautiful aspects of chaos with the formal aspects of discipline you can end up with interesting creative output. I am creative because that’s the only way I know how to live.”

Moby, musician

Q & A

Frank Pardelic

Frank, tell us a little about your background and how you came to design such unusual games?

I'm a Mechanical Engineer/Design Draftsman by profession, specialising in plastics. I came up with the first version of the three-dimensional multi-level strategy board-game which I now call Intercept in January 1992. Our first child, Jelisa, was due in March, so I started thinking about what I could do or make to get rich, and ensure that our first child would want for nothing. At the time, I was watching a science-fiction series on television that featured three-dimensional objects. I started wondering what I could make that was three-dimensional, and the game of naughts and crosses came to mind. That was too easy, so I expanded the board to 4x4, added a fourth layer and, hey presto, 'Intercept' was invented. I had a vision of what it looked like, so even though it was very late at night, I went out to the garage, cut up some clear perspex for the platforms, ripped apart my wife's old spice rack to get the wooden dowels to separate the layers, and emerged from the garage at around 2am with a very rough-looking prototype. I then made the playing pieces out of colored paper, played a trial game, and it worked.

I have invented several other games and products since then. I come up with ideas by putting myself into other people's

situations (either children or adults) and saying to myself, 'What would I do or create to have fun?', and then thoughts start flowing into my mind until one idea really moves me, like a light being switched on. Then I write my thoughts down on paper, and note the date. Also, a lot of my ideas for inventions, and improvements on products, come to me during nights when there is a lot of fun and laughter, either at a party or a barbecue. It's hard to explain, but when they come to me, it's like receiving an electric shock, or getting hit on the head with a ball.

So what comes first, how you want it to end up, or just the concept of a game?

The concept of the game comes first. Later, I refine it in terms of appearance, safety, practicality, strength, and ease and economy of mass production, etc.

Is your work environment messy or neat?

I start off as a very neat person, but then I slowly get messy. This usually happens when I try to do too much at once. Then I have a cleaning busy-bee, and start the cycle again. I hate people seeing me unorganised, or not looking professional.

What advice would you give a small business owner wanting to be more creative with their product range or business possibilities?

Start by asking yourself 'How can my product be different?', either in terms of appearance or use, and 'Can people enjoy or

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benefit from my product? In order to achieve this you shouldn't be afraid to be different, and you should never say it can't be done. To me, everything can be done – you just have to believe in yourself and your products, and all the possibilities will open up for you. Never give up.

Have you ever made a magnificent mistake that long term was a great opportunity?

Not yet. So far I have been very lucky. I look at it as if I do not have problems, only opportunities to improve.

Can you share some of your future plans with us?

We want to start by launching Intercept in Australia, and from this we hope to gain experience on the best way to promote the product, and use this learning curve to then export to various countries using those techniques that prove successful in Australia. I like to travel and see the world with my family, so hopefully with Intercept I can combine work and pleasure. When money starts to come in from sales of Intercept, we will start our next venture and go through the process again, hopefully to eventually leave something behind for our kids to carry on with.

If readers want to check out your games and products, how can they make contact with you?

They can go to our website, **www.intercept3d.com**

Fun Ways To Get Your Brain Working

If you really want to stretch your thinking, why not try making up some words. Sounds crazy? Well, you mustn't have read *EVEolution*, by Faith Popcorn and Lys Marigold, published in 2000.

The authors provide a glossary of terms that appear throughout the book, referring to it as the BrainReserve Glossary – the language of the book, and the language of the future.

Examples include:

- **Blamestorming:** a negative, non-productive ideation session that prohibits creative thinking.
- **Brailing the Culture:** monitoring cultural signals – magazines, newspapers, books, videos, etc. – in order to 'feel out' the trends.
- **Brand-Me-Down:** the generational passing-down of a brand, based on its good performance and reputation.
- **FutureScope:** a future-focused landscape of the consumer marketplace.
- **Mouse Potato:** lolling in front of the computer instead of lounging in front of the TV.
- **NanoSpan:** the extra-short attention span of today's ultra-busy '99 lives' female consumer.
- **Perfessional:** The melding and blending of the personal and the professional life.

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EVEolution is not only a great read, but it will also get your creative juices flowing. There are dozens more made-up words like the examples above. When I read the glossary, the thing that was most obvious to me was that each word is very visual and descriptive. Once I had read the definition, it was easy to see how the compound words were made up, though I probably never would have thought of combining the two underlying words.

Rodney Marks, the Australian corporate humorist who specialises in Hoaxes and Jokeses®, uses a fun system called BUZZWORD BINGO, which involves small cards featuring collections of current buzzwords under the headings of acronyms and initialisms, computing, human resources and leadership.

You can download examples of these at:
www.speaker.com.au. The instructions are simple – ‘When you hear one BUZZWORD too many, shout Bingo! and go home.’

Rodney has tricked many audiences with his corporate hoaxes, and has a wonderful command of the English language – liberally sprinkled with buzzwords. Look for his best-selling book, *The Management Contradictionary* by Benjamin Marks, Rodney Marks and Robert Spillane.

So How Can You Invent New Words?

Some of you may be thinking, 'Why bother?' I'm sure those people are creative, but they still have their creativity locked away – possibly afraid to make a mistake. The good news is, there's no right and wrong when you're flexing your creative muscles. Let's look at a list of ten words, and see how many new words we can make from mixing and matching them. Further, let's see if we can create a visual image with each of the new words we make:

Digital

Remedial

Thought

Active

Writers

Ultra

Maximum

Doc

Dazzle

Find

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Here are some examples of compound words we could create:

- ☐ Maximum Dazzle
- ☐ Digital Dazzle
- ☐ Remedial Doc
- ☐ Thought Find
- ☐ Ultra Find
- ☐ Writers Find
- ☐ Digital Writers
- ☐ Maximum Remedial
- ☐ Digital Doc
- ☐ Find Thought
- ☐ Ultra Doc

Take a moment to come up with a definition for each of these new words. Some of them may lead nowhere, but maybe, just maybe, one or more of them is a revelation. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers – it's all good!

Q & A

Neen James

In your current role, what types of creative work do you do, and how do you get to the point where lots of creative ideas start to flow? What sorts of things can get your creative juices flowing?

My role as an International Productivity Expert requires me to be constantly creative with my clients, audiences and product development. One technique I use is mind mapping (made popular by Tony Buzan). This allows me to brainstorm to capture all my thoughts and ideas, and then gain clarity, all on one page.

To get my creative juices flowing, I like to do a 'brain dump' of all my ideas onto paper, and then organise them. I am inspired by books, websites and music, so I use these as tools to help with my creativity.

What is the most innovative idea, project or system you have seen in Australia in the last 12 months?

Being based in the United States, this is a little difficult for me to answer, but from an international perspective, a neat innovation in the publishing world is iPhotos (a MAC program), that allows you to take your digital photos and create a book as a gift, a holiday souvenir or even a product catalogue or

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showcase brochure. The cost is very reasonable, it all occurs online, and it ships quickly.

On a global basis, what creative and innovative minds do you admire, and why?

- Bono, from U2, impresses me with his use of his international profile to achieve global goals. He is able to rally support from political and social leaders to make a difference in the world.
- I also admire Oprah, for similar reasons. Her influence and power to move an audience to action and to gain support from world leaders and celebrities made a huge difference in the lives of the Hurricane Katrina victims (and on an ongoing basis in African countries).
- ipod (the brand) is continually evolving to create smaller, faster, less expensive tools for everyday use, while catering for many tastes, styles and price points.
- Motorola's reinvention of their mobile phone offering has been impressive. They were notorious for their complicated menu system, but with the launch of the Moto RAZR, and later the SLVR, they have captured a huge international market with their easy menu system, sexy packaging, colour screens, and iTunes.

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Steven Spielberg, director and producer, when asked, “Why are you creative?”, responded, “I was born that way because of my mother and my father.”

StrateGEE[®]:

a new creative
thinking tool
for individuals,
teams and
workplaces

The Creative Edge

Have you ever thought to yourself 'I wish I was more creative', or 'I'd love to be more creative, but I'm too left-brained'? I know I have!

I began investigating creativity because I was fascinated with the concept. I wanted to be able to understand what it was that made some people more creative than others: how did creative thinkers develop their skills; where did this elusive quality stem from; were you just born creative, or could you learn to be creative; and most importantly ... how could someone become more creative if they wanted to? All this was because I wanted to be more creative.

The topic became my obsession for many years, well seven to be exact, because that is how long it took me to write my PhD thesis, which was titled 'A cognitive model for understanding creative thinking'. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a case of 'The operation was a success, but the patient died'. It is a constant source of irony and amusement for me that I wrote 100,000 words about creativity in a really uncreative way! In my quest to quantify the unquantifiable, to explain the inexplicable, to demystify the mysterious, I deconstructed it to the point that it disappeared. It was rather like the story about the man who, totally fascinated by seeing an electric light bulb for the first time, cut it off to take it home with him.

Another irony was that, having written my PhD thesis, I was now more steeped in 'left-brain' analytical thinking than ever, rather than in creative thinking. If I was looking to become more creative I had failed dismally, or so I thought at the time. In my quest to get closer to the grail, I had inadvertently

taken a path which led me in the opposite direction. However, being a left-brained person, I nevertheless experienced a tremendous sense of satisfaction with the outcome, because I had managed to come up with a loose formula (a heuristic) for creative thinking.

In hindsight, I realise that it was all part of the journey. The path wasn't leading in the opposite direction, but was simply an alternative route, a route for left-brained people, a route I would like to share with other left-brained people who may need a little help being more creative. I have called it the StrateGEE® model for creative thinking.

Why StrateGEE® in the Contemporary Workplace

In the same way that de Bono's six thinking hats provides an approach to, or a framework for, thinking creatively, StrateGEE® helps people to initiate and sustain the thinking process for creativity and innovation. You'll see where the name comes from shortly.

I believe that, once mastered, this model can help people to 'manage' the level of complexity we live with in the contemporary workplace and, what's more, be used to create innovative responses to problems. We live in an era of unprecedented knowledge proliferation. Information today may be combined, packaged and applied in an infinite variety of ways. It means that in order to function well in the modern workplace, we need to be able to handle complexity without

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compromising outcomes. Corporate innovation is brought about, in part, by accelerating competition and the application of new technologies. One characteristic of the current drive for innovation is the combining of disciplines and knowledge bases. For example, the combination of artistic and technical skills, or of professional knowledge and interpersonal ability, will be increasingly important to maximising the value of 'intellectual capital'¹. The StrateGEE® model helps people utilise their vast store of knowledge for creative outcomes. It identifies different kinds of thinking, and the thinking mechanisms we use during creative problem-solving. This process can be helpful to anyone faced with the daunting task of creating an innovative and original outcome in response to any problem.

Right now, there is a renewed interest in creativity and innovation in the workplace because of the pace of change globally. Organisations will only stay competitive if they innovate. The last time there was this level of interest in creative thinking was during the sixties, when creative thinking was seen as an essential ingredient in the United States by a nation that wanted to win the space race. Several techniques to enhance creative thinking became popular during that time, for example brainstorming, lateral thinking, and remote association. 'Synectics', which involves the joining together of different and apparently disparate elements, became a household name. Many creativity training programs had their inception during this period.

Forty years on from the space race, the knowledge proliferation that is characterising the 'new economy' has

been referred to as a 'second Renaissance', and has sparked renewed interest in creative thinking. As in the first Renaissance of the sixteenth century, knowledge and creativity are highly marketable commodities to be used for business, commerce and profit. In fact, it has been innovation and creativity, rather than increased productivity, that has produced such a breakneck pace of change in the global economy.

There are many reasons for this, for example:

- New technologies, ideas and products that generate their own markets, thereby eliminating the danger of market saturation
- The global economic infrastructure can now support and exploit the explosion of new ideas and technologies
- New knowledge finances and provides a platform for further knowledge creation
- Highly-skilled knowledge workers are being substantially rewarded for generating new and innovative ideas, commodities and technologies².

This unprecedented expansion of knowledge and creativity has led the 'new economy' to be referred to as the 'knowledge-based' economy, in which the primary resources are those that are intangible, such as knowledge and information. Now, more than ever, we need methodologies and useful strategies for individuals and organisations seeking to grow a culture of innovation and creativity within the workplace.

Some Groundwork

Before going any further, let's lay down some groundwork:

- In relation to things creative, there is no single correct answer, but rather a multitude of possibilities
- Problems requiring creativity do not have right or wrong answers, only better or worse ones
- Creative solutions evolve or emerge incrementally as people experiment with different ideas
- Everyone is capable of thinking creatively – some of us just need a little bit of help
- We all know much more than we think, but much of our knowledge is locked away in places we can't easily get to, so sometimes we need help to access knowledge that would otherwise remain unused.

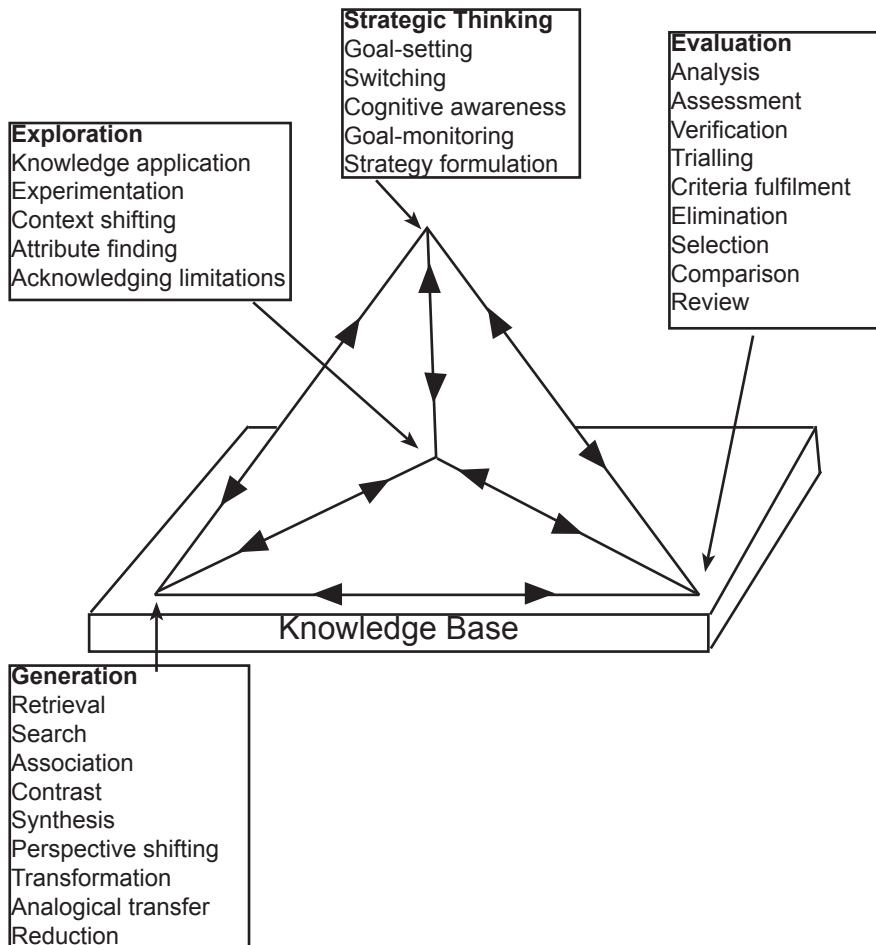
StrateGEE® - A Tool to Help You be More Creative

StrateGEE® is a *heuristic* for creative thinking. A heuristic is a 'rule of thumb' method of tackling problems which, rather than guaranteeing a particular outcome, simply gives you an approach to use. In other words, ***it gives you a starting point and some signposts, but you create the journey.***

You can use *StrateGEE®* to be more creative!

The *StrateGEE®* model identifies:

- Four different kinds of thinking used during creative problem-solving
- Mechanisms by which cognitive resources may be synergistically and creatively deployed
- Ways of combining knowledge and thought processes to produce creative outcomes.



The StrateGEE® Model for Creative Thinking³

What does it all mean?

Let's start with the platform – the base on which everything else rests. This represents your knowledge base – everything you know. That's a whole lot of stuff! You've been accumulating knowledge and information throughout your entire life. It is all locked away somewhere in your long-term memory. You know an ENORMOUS amount, much more than you realise. Think about what a complex task it is to drive a car. Remember how difficult it was when you first started? How scary was it to go out onto the open road those first few times? I remember my sweaty palms and my pounding heart. It took all my concentration. Now, it is such a familiar activity, and has become so automated, that there is plenty of attention left to have a conversation, plan the day's events and even apply mascara (just kidding!) while I'm driving. Think about all the complex tasks that you are able to do with ease. What an enormous store of knowledge is locked away there. Often, we can't access our knowledge when it is locked away, either because we simply don't think of it, or if we do, we don't know where we've stored it. Wouldn't it be great if we could find a way of calling up that knowledge in the service of creativity and innovation?

Knowledge may be accessed by a conscious and systematic search, or it may be pre-consciously activated and called into active, working memory by way of its conceptual ties and

associations to a concept being consciously utilised. In other words, every concept stored in memory is linked to others by association. And when we remember (or activate) one concept, there are others that are waiting in the wings, so to speak. For example, if I asked you what you associated with the word dentist, some might say teeth, others pain, still others comfortable recliner (yeah, right!). We use this process when we brainstorm.

This brings us to the pyramid structure of the model, which represents the conscious application of creative thought actions.

The pyramid of creative thinking

The pyramid has three base-points, and an apex. The three base-points represent the three different kinds of conscious thought processes we use during creative problem-solving. These are Generation, Exploration and Evaluation. The apex represents the highest order of thinking, which oversees the process. It is referred to in many different ways – metathinking; metacognition; third order thinking; thinking about thinking; thinking management; strategic thinking; executive control (sounds like a bad management team!). We're going to go with Strategic Thinking. Now you see where the name of the model – **StrateGEE®** – came from.

Each kind of thinking has particular thought actions that drive it. The lists in each category are not meant to be definitive. Please feel free to add your own items to create your personal

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creativity heuristic. If you decide to use this model, you may even want to change the names of the thought actions so that they make more sense to you. For example, you may rename synthesis as combination; or attribute finding as *characteristics*; or *criteria fulfilment* as *meeting standards* – whatever works for you.

Instead of giving you a definition of each thought action, I am going to give you a question that initiates that particular action³, which is much more user-friendly.

Generation

Generation marshals the mental raw materials which promote creative thinking. It is responsible for bringing new information to the problem at hand. You can use the following questions to help your generation.

Retrieval	What are the things I already know that I can easily call up into working memory to help me get started on this project or problem?
Search	Are there any other ideas I can come up with if I dig a little deeper into my mental database, or think more broadly about the problem?

Association	Can I think of something really similar and then something really different that can be connected in some way with my current idea?
Contrast	What is the opposite of this, and what would happen if I put it together with what I'm thinking about right now?
Synthesis	What would happen if I blended two or more ideas together to come up with something different, but which retained some of the features of the original ideas?
Perspective shifting	What would I see if I examined the situation/idea from a completely different point of view?"
Transformation	If I was to make a drawing or a basic model of this idea or concept, and then folded it or manipulated it in different ways, would it begin to look like something else that was interesting?
Analogical transfer	Are there any particular features of this idea that resemble any particular aspects of other really different things?
Reduction	What would happen if I made this idea/ thing really simple and basic?

Exploration

Exploration takes place as emergent features worthy of exploitation are identified, extracted, and manipulated further. Exploratory activity is differentiated from generative activity in so far as it is more directed and organised and, where possible, outcomes are assembled from the information retrieved.

Knowledge Application	How can I develop and expand this idea both by using my existing knowledge, and understanding or researching more information?
Experimentation	Does anything interesting happen if I fold this/cut it in half/ bend the edge/ curl it up/ change the shape, etc.? (useful if creating a physical product)
Context shifting	If I put this idea or thing into a completely different place or time, what would happen to it?
Attribute finding	What are some of the patterns, trends or features that I can see coming out in the project?
Acknowledging limitations	What could be some of the problems I might have to think about?

Evaluation

Without evaluation, creative problem-solving would be severely frustrated, resulting in inferior solutions. At some point, the value or usefulness of new ideas must be determined.

Analysis	What are the strengths and weaknesses of this solution?
Assessment	Am I ready to make some definite decisions about whether this idea is a good one?
Verification	What's good about the things I've decided to retain so far?
Trialling	If I 'test drive' this, does it work?
Criteria fulfilment	Does this solution do (or look like it will eventually do) everything it is supposed to?
Elimination	Does this idea, or some part of it, need to be taken out because it is just not useful for this particular project?
Selection	Some ideas, or parts of them, may have to go, but what is definitely staying?
Comparison	Why is this outcome better or worse than another one?
Review	Would doing a 'stocktake' of where I'm at now be helpful?

Strategic thinking

This kind of thinking helps creative problem-solvers to:

- Formulate plans and goals
- Reflect critically on the appropriateness of strategies and concepts
- Employ different ones where necessary
- Monitor their progress along the way.

The efficiency of the problem-solving process and the quality of the final outcome is dependant on the effectiveness with which strategic thinking switches, monitors and combines knowledge actions so that the combined effect of the various parts exceeds the sum of their individual effects.

Goal setting	When I'm finished, what do I want this outcome to achieve?
Switching	If what I'm doing at the moment isn't working, or if I'm stuck, or if I simply want some fresh ideas, what else can I do?
Cognitive awareness	What questions should I ask myself at the moment to help me decide whether or not I'm generally happy with the way things are going?
Goal monitoring	Is what I'm doing at the moment going to help me achieve the aim of the project?

Strategy formulation	Is what I'm doing at the moment taking me in the general direction of where I think I want to go, even if I'm not sure about where that is, exactly?
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So now you have lots of prompts, in the form of these sets of questions, to help you initiate and sustain the creative thinking process. But wait, there's more... and it's not a set of steak knives. Keep reading.

What do the arrows represent?

With creative problem-solving, we don't know what the final outcome will look like, so we can't go straight there. If you were given a long division problem, you would simply apply the appropriate rules to get you to the right answer, and there would be only one correct answer. When you are thinking creatively however, your thinking jumps around all over the place. You may generate some new ideas, and explore them for a while, but then decide that you need some more new ideas to enrich the process, so you go back to generating. Every now and then, you may evaluate an emerging solution before deciding that you need to explore it in a different way. The arrows represent the fact that thinking during creative problem-solving switches among all the different thinking actions. I call this feature, which happens throughout the entire problem-solving process, thinking interactively. The arrows are there to remind us that it is good to combine the different

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kinds of thinking. Sure, early in the process you will do lots of generating, and then later in the process, when your solution begins to emerge, you will tend to do more evaluating, to ensure that the final outcome is useful and workable. But the thing to always remember is, don't get stuck in a rut. Switch around, using as many of the cognitive actions as possible. Your final product will be all the better for it.

So what?

I love that question! When I was writing my thesis, my supervisor used to ask me that all the time. Although it was frustrating at the time, in hindsight, I know it kept me accountable. What's the point of generating new knowledge if you can't show its usefulness and application?

Conceptual tools such as the StrateGEE® Model serve as useful aids or scaffolds for creative thinking by providing a heuristic approach to the creative problem-solving process.

Often in a workplace environment, conditions are not conducive to thinking creatively, or producing creative outcomes. Some of the killers of creativity are time pressures, interruptions, competitiveness, work overload, burnout...does that sound like your workplace? Sometimes, it is too difficult to even get started. There is nothing more daunting than a blank page or an empty canvas, but by using a tool such as StrateGEE®, you can kick-start the process. Because it consists of a whole lot of signposts and prompts, StrateGEE® can also help teams and individuals to make better use of their time.

So StrateGEE® is a kick-starter and a time-saver. But wait – there's even more.

Using a model such as StrateGEE® can also provide individuals or groups with a language with which they can identify, and make explicit, otherwise invisible internal, cognitive processes. Externalising thinking is a good way of helping people to reflect on the processes they are using during creative problem-solving, and using a model such as StrateGEE® helps people to become better at it more quickly.

So, do you have a problem you need to solve creatively? Try applying the thought actions in the StrateGEE® model. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at how creative you really are.

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Do you need your corporation or workplace to be more innovative? Dr Irena Yashin-Shaw PhD delivers a one-day intensive creative thinking training program that can unlock the creativity of your team. If you need a new competitive edge, call Irena today on 07 3849 5003.

“A key lesson is that collaboration is key. Innovation is the chance combination of previously unrelated ideas. The ideas do not need to be new, or even particularly special. They can also come from anywhere. We have put collaboration at the centre of what we do. Innovation - for those of us who aren't Google - is not about reinventing the world. Innovation is recognising the truffles buried within the organisation, and then making the most of them.”

**Paul Thorley, CEO,
Capgemini Australia**

**(Source: Fast Thinking;
Winter 2006; p15)**

Q & A

Greg Jenkins

In your current role, what types of creative work do you do, and how do you get to the point where lots of creative ideas start to flow? What sorts of things can get your creative juices flowing?

I enjoy creating. I have always loved finding new and unique ways of converting complex processes into simple ones, and I believe that there are always better ways to do things.

In my current business, I create toolkits and simulation game frameworks for facilitators and change agents. Generally, all I need to spark creativity is a problem or a project that I'm passionate about.

What is the most innovative idea, project or system you have seen in the Australian or global marketplace in the last 12 months?

Innovation might look as though it has happened overnight, but the reality is, the innovative ideas that we see have most likely been in gestation for years or even decades. Creative ideas take a long time to bite. The Internet was a 'new' idea, hatched in the 1960s, that took decades to catch on.

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The ideas that I like now aren't necessarily new, but are for their time. These ideas centre around renewable energy, waste reduction, water management, and recycling.

Have you ever made a magnificent mistake that resulted in a great idea or opportunity?

I have no magnificent mistake to share. Rather, my life is filled with many small mistakes. I believe that innovation requires an action orientation. When you try a lot of new things, you make many mistakes along the way. The spin-off will inevitably be creative ideas. Thomas Edison is the inspiration to all innovators. Before making the first successful light bulb, he made several thousand unsuccessful ones. Asked how he felt about having failed so many times, Edison is said to have replied, "I have not failed. I've discovered 10,000 ways which don't work".

On a global basis, what creative and innovative minds do you admire, and why?

There are many creative minds in this world. Some people are naturally creative, and creative techniques can be learned. To come up with creative ideas is the easy part. Putting those ideas to work as innovations is the hard part. I most admire those who not only come up with ideas, but hang in long enough to bring those ideas to fruition. The key to doing this is focus. The person I most admire in the field of technology is Steve Jobs at Apple. Jobs is not only creative, he never gives up. I believe that Al Gore has the potential to be a great catalyst for innovators in the environmental field. He is

mobilising billions of eco-dollars towards potentially great eco-innovations.

Innovation and Creativity

We often hear the words creativity and innovation used interchangeably. They are very different. Creativity is the process of coming up with ideas and new approaches to things, whereas innovation brings those ideas to life.

Innovation takes creative ideas and puts them to work to deliver new products, processes, or services. Creativity can be both an individual and a group process, such as brainstorming, whereas innovation is a management process that uses tools and rules. Whilst some innovations are breakthroughs, this is rare. Most innovations are incremental, adding value to existing products or processes. Even when an innovation is delivered to market, often it is not readily accepted.

Everett Rogers explains that any new innovation or idea is taken up in a process that he calls innovation diffusion. According to Rogers, different types adopt innovations in the following order:

1. Innovators (2.5%) - venturesome, educated, multiple information sources, greater propensity to take risk
2. Early adopters (13.5%) – social leaders, popular, educated

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3. Early majority (34%) – deliberate, many informal social contacts
4. Late majority (34%) – sceptical, traditional, lower socio-economic status
5. Laggards (16%) – neighbours and friends are main information sources, fear of debt.

Greg Jenkins is a change agent, and Managing Director of the TinCAN Learning Company – providing learning to change the world.
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Robyn Henderson

Unleash the intrapreneurs within your company

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Entrepreneurs are people who have both the will and the skill to project an idea or scheme into the future, and by backing their judgement with innovative action and persistence, turn that idea into reality. Intrapreneurs are people who do this within organisations. So, who are the intrapreneurs in your company?

Many managers make the mistake of underestimating their staff's potential, rarely asking them for input. Suggestion boxes end up covered in cobwebs as they lay dormant, waiting for a spark of inspiration to be dropped inside. When questioned, staff often respond with, "Why bother, they never listen to me anyway", or even worse, "I just work here".

Robert L. Schwartz tells us that 'The entrepreneur is essentially a visualiser and an actualiser. . .he can visualise something, and when he visualises it, he sees exactly how to make it happen'.

Think 'What if ...?' often

What if once a month we had a think tank in each department – with every staff member actively contributing? What if the think tank was facilitated by an outsider – someone who was not locked into 'This is the way we do it round here' thinking, and actually challenged the way things were being done? What would happen?

What if some of the ideas required very little effort and expense, and when implemented, increased job satisfaction

and productivity significantly? Increased productivity means a better bottom line. What would happen if you could achieve that?

In short, the staff would be happier, resulting in decreased absenteeism, an engaged workplace and increased output. So let's think about it for a moment. What if we tried this in our workplace? What if it worked?

An accounting firm invited me to brainstorm with twenty of their senior managers. Basically, the partners wanted increased productivity, more billable hours, but the question was, how best to achieve it. Although I had done my research, as an outsider, I was not privy to what could and could not be done. Once I had built rapport with the group and earned their trust, I asked them this question: 'If you were made senior partner today, what changes would you make within the organisation?'

It took a few minutes for them to feel okay about answering, and to assist the process, I turned my back to them and, as the ideas flowed, wrote them on the whiteboard, making sure to acknowledge each contribution with a 'Thanks', 'Great', or 'Good idea'. Realising that one of the greatest fears people have is making a mistake in front of their peers, I made sure I did not query or mock any of the ideas, no matter how outrageous they were.

Prior to commencing this exercise, I had explained that there are generally three sorts of ideas - outrageous, middle-of-the-road, and mainstream. When outrageous ideas go to the marketing department they tend to become mainstream

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– ‘Let’s play safe, and stick with what we know’. This is okay, if we want our company to be the same as everyone else’s. However, if we want to shine and lead our industry, we have to be prepared to break with tradition sometimes, and try new things. We should encourage outrageous ideas, because with modification, they can become middle-of-the-road ideas.

In thirty minutes, the group came up with dozens of ideas. One example of an idea that was very easy to implement was ‘more desks’. ‘Excuse me – more desks? You’re saying you don’t have enough desks? How many more desks do you need? What exactly is the problem?’ It transpired that in one department, where many of the staff were often out at clients’ premises on assignment, at least once a week three or four people found themselves in the office at the same time and they all had to share the one desk. Crazy stuff! Another manager mentioned that there were a number of desks spare in his area, and they were welcome to take them. Problem solved. This ridiculous situation had been happening for over a year, but no-one had bothered to look for a solution. Productivity was down in that area, but what else would you expect when professional people are not given the basic resources to do their job.

As a result of the brainstorming session, we were able to come up with a list of concrete suggestions for improvements, and a time frame in which the first 50 percent of those suggestions would be actioned. The other suggestions were to be referred to the senior partners for action. Were the managers satisfied? Did this meeting exceed their expectations? Were they given acknowledgment for their ideas? Yes, yes, and yes!

Most important of all, senior management listened to them.

Having listened, it is then equally important that management either take action on the suggestions, or report back on those that have been put on the back-burner, either temporarily or indefinitely.

With another banking client, I asked the question, 'What is your greatest time-waster on the job?' Some of the answers were astounding – faulty equipment, antiquated fax machines taking too long to send documents, poor lighting, triple-handling of documents. Again, a list of recommendations was produced. Action was taken almost immediately on 80 percent of the list, resulting in happier staff and increased productivity.

We often hear the phrase 'Work smarter, not harder' bandied about. Brainstorming allows us to tap in to the creativity of the whole group, not just the bosses. We can then collectively come up with ideas on how we can work smarter.

When there are recruitment-freezes and cost-cutting, staff are often reluctant to ask for improvements, anticipating a resounding 'NO'. Brainstorming gives them an opportunity to re-energise each other, and come up with creative solutions.

No matter how small the organisation, brainstorming is effective. Where possible, bringing in a facilitator from outside the organisation has a powerful effect, as they don't buy in to the preconceptions inherent in 'This is the way we do it around here'. Growing businesses today is really about growing your people – about giving them encouragement and recognition,

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and delegating authority to empower them.

The success of away-from-home conferences is not totally dependent on the venue or the speakers, but rather on the opportunity for the delegates to relax, to get to know each other better in an informal setting, and to unofficially brainstorm with each other. When we're relaxed, our creative juices flow. Brainstorming triggers that creative energy.

Watching a brainstorming session is quite stimulating. You can almost imagine a ball of energy being thrown from one person to another as the ideas flow. Even the most shy people get caught up in the excitement – just make sure someone is writing down all the ideas!

Tips for running effective brainstorming sessions to unleash the intrapreneurs within your company:

- Sell the idea to staff members by asking for their help in solving problems X, Y and Z.
- Use an area removed from the group's normal work area, e.g. the boardroom or lunch room.
- It is important that everyone can see each other's face. Circular groups are quite effective.
- Put a time limit on both individual stages and the entire session.
- Delegate a scribe to record the ideas as they flow.
- Acknowledge where ideas come from, perhaps by using contributors' initials.
- Encourage outrageous ideas.
- Bring in an outside facilitator if possible, and allow time for this person to bond with the group.
- Have fun! You might like to have a 'bright spark' award for the best idea of the day – voted for by the participants, of course.

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- Prepare an action plan at the end of the session, including an agreed time frame.
- Get back to the participants with the results.
- Diarise a date for your next brainstorming session.

Before long, you will be working smarter, not harder. You will have unlocked a whole company of intrapreneurs who are growing your organisation as well as themselves.

Q & A

Fran Eustace

The C-Pod – corporate social responsibility initiatives – is unique and quite different in today's competitive marketplace. How did the idea take shape?

I have been involved in fundraising initiatives nearly all my life; even at school I got all the other kids to support charities.

One of my daughters, Melissa, has Down Syndrome, and I have always been an initiator or significant contributor in time, energy and thinking about new ways for her or the organisations she has been involved with to raise money.

I quickly realised that many people can't give a great deal of money, however they can contribute time, expertise, humour and ideas.

Also, on the negative side, I have been in an organisation that didn't involve all the stakeholders, and started to decline in all areas. The first things that suffered were enthusiasm, team spirit and the loss of our vision. I learnt a lot!

However the most important factor in forming and developing C-Pod was my extensive background in playing and coaching representative and club sport.

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I believe in good teams being able to achieve a great deal more than individuals, and this was my key reason for creating C-Pod. The ten charities that comprise C-Pod have already demonstrated that as a united team, learning from each other, they and their corporate partners will benefit enormously.

Rather than just contributing finances, C-Pod is providing a clear basis for all the partners to commit time and energy. This has resulted in a great deal of learning about the requirements of charities. Great teams that work for each other do require commitment, time and enthusiasm.

The outcomes I am seeking are increased financial benefit, increased corporate social responsibility, and increased enjoyment from our work. C-Pod is well on the way to achieving excellence.

Being such an innovative concept, what reaction did you get from the charities when you took the cross-networking idea to them, bearing in mind that traditionally, each charity has had their own patch, and now you were encouraging them to come together under one banner?

This is a very interesting question. From the smaller charities, I received instant warmth and acceptance. Part of this was no doubt due to how busy and time-poor all people who work in charities are. They believe that C-Pod is adding vital and needed people resources.

All charities believe in the benefits of having a closer relationship with their corporate supporters, in addition to the very necessary fundraising component. The larger charities quickly saw the benefit of utilising the broader expertise that C-Pod offered to corporate members.

At our very first charity workshop, it quickly became clear that we could learn a lot from each other, that we enjoyed the experience of a 'knowledge download', and that we could form a very successful team.

Do you have plans for C-Pod on a national or international basis?

Corporate Social Responsibility is, thankfully, on the increase, so I've placed no boundaries on C-Pod. It has the potential to quickly become national, and then international.

At present, it is going through a developmental period of trialling, learning, changing, and then moving forward, and is heavily dependent on the quality of the people who are involved. Fortunately, we have great people on board. It is an exciting period, and C-Pod still needs to prove itself, but it will!

How do you bring your new ideas to fruition?

When we come up with a new concept, we discuss and develop it with people we trust and respect. We then broaden the field of contact, and develop the budget and the perceived long-term benefits. Then comes the reality check. Do we have

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the time, energy and resources to do this? What are the costs? What do we lose in terms of time, etc. if we pick this up and make it a priority? Can we sell it to our C-Pod members? Will we all benefit?

On a global basis, who are some creative people you admire?

- David Bussau, AM – who delivered the 2006 Australia Day Address. An inspiring social entrepreneur, who has been hailed for his innovative approach to solving world poverty. He has challenged the conventional wealth redistribution model of development by pioneering a unique process known as micro enterprise development (MED), addressing the root causes of poverty through responsible wealth creation.
- Father Chris Riley – an inspirational man who has touched so many lives.
- C-Pod Charity colleagues – who put 100% into their jobs and their people.

What are some of the most innovative things you are seeing in the marketplace, other than C-Pod?

Volunteer x Change – Founder and CEO Mr Rob De Pinto. This won the 2006 International ePhilanthropy Award in the category for Best Community Building/Volunteerism and/or Activism Campaign.

Volunteer x Change is the world's first Virtual Volunteer system, delivering valuable professional services, skills and advice to the Community Sector via the web, 24/7, anywhere in the world.

Volunteers get the flexibility and convenience of volunteering via their computer and using their experience and skills to help solve the challenges that community organisations face. Contribute when you want, for as long as you want. You also receive feedback on contributions, and get a record of your work for professional development.

This is a real ROI for businesses. Allowing staff to become Virtual Volunteers is a fast, easy and cost-effective way to contribute real value to the community.

Do you ever worry that in coming up with very different ideas, others will steal your ideas?

Again, I go back to my sporting background. You have to compete, do the best you can, stay focused, and the results will come. C-Pod is a great program, with a fantastic team. We believe in ourselves.

What plans do you have on the drawing board for your individual businesses?

- ☐ Developing the team
- ☐ Developing a C-Pod Top Ten Corporate Team to match the 10 charity members

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- Commencing the C-Pod Great Idea Program across a broad range of corporate organisations
- Initiating the events program associated with C-Pod, to enhance relationships, develop the team, and develop and achieve our goals
- Create the C-Pod 1000 Club, to give C-Pod a broad exposure in the marketplace, and involve a high profile radio station in promoting the C-Pod 1000 Club
- To continue to learn and develop the fantastic potential offered by C-Pod CSR Initiatives.

**Fran Eustace loves working for
and with great teams, and wants C-Pod
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Does your childhood influence your creativity?

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‘Robyn is a creative person!’ I doubt that any of my school teachers ever wrote that on my report cards in primary or secondary school. I wasn’t good at Art, I was okay at Latin, French, English and Music, and I failed Science and History. Yet I think I’ve nurtured a creative spark for most of my life. I loved craft, and used to crochet and knit as a child. I actually have a theory, totally unproven, that sometimes when you have a learning disability, another part of the brain is strengthened by way of compensation, and you learn to think in different ways – ways that ultimately make you creative!

‘No way’, I can hear some of you saying. ‘There’s no chance that your theory will ever be proven correct.’ But let me tell you why I think I developed another part of my brain. To describe me as a sensitive teenager in a chronically dysfunctional family would pretty much sum it up. I needed glasses when I was nine years old, but I didn’t get them until I was nineteen. You see, the thought of looking unattractive in glasses was so great at the age of nine that, even though I had realised that I needed glasses, I chose not to tell my parents, so they had no idea. In class, I hid my disability by sitting very close to the front of the room at every opportunity, and when that was not possible, I memorised, memorised and memorised.

I went to school from the late ‘50s through to 1968, when I left school at fifteen years of age. There seemed absolutely no point in doing the higher school certificate or even remotely contemplating going to university. If I couldn’t read the board for the fourth form exams, nothing was going to change for university. I recall my piano teacher asking me why I was squinting to read the sheet music, but I must have satisfied her

with my response, because she never asked again. And so, I managed to sabotage my senior education.

There was a funny side to all this though, which occurred whenever we had exams. I attended a Catholic school, and the Latin teacher would write up a slab of Latin on the blackboard (this was the mid-60s, long before whiteboards or PowerPoint arrived). I would squint to read the first line and off I would go. I had memorised the material we were taught, and could write lengthy passages of Latin verbatim. I'm sure that sometimes I wrote more than I needed to write, but I always got an A in Latin.

Maybe needing glasses and choosing not to wear them is not a disability in the true sense, but I do believe I strongly developed different parts of my brain. These parts today enable me to brainstorm very quickly and confidently, to provide quick responses and solutions, to think on my feet, and to create new models and systems to empower others. I also have a great memory, not for names, but for faces and pieces of information, and I'm sure those early years of memorising helped here.

Parents Influence

My father was an entrepreneur who left school at the age of thirteen (he was born in 1916, and in those days many students did not complete their education), went to war, and then built a carpentry business before establishing a toy manufacturing business in the early '50s. The Australian Koala

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Bear Manufacturing Company was one of the few Australian-owned companies manufacturing Australian souvenirs in Australia. As a child, I recall my father supplying kewpie dolls to the Royal Easter Show and toy koala bears to Taronga Park Zoo, and it was nothing for Dad to bring home eyes to cut (the toy koalas had glass eyes that had to be inserted in a specific way) or tickets to thread (each bear had a map of Australia swing tag threaded onto a rubber band and then placed around their neck). We never actually had a koala bear as a toy during our childhood years – Dad used to say he saw enough of them at work without seeing more of them at night.

I worked for my father for 18 months from 1970 and then again in 1987 for two years. To say we clashed is an understatement. I think the reality was, we were too alike – both strong-willed innovators. What I learned from working at the ‘factory’ was the ability to make something out of nothing – taking a piece of kangaroo skin and, through a process of cutting, sewing, machining, turning, filling and finishing, making a toy koala bear. Not something I necessarily need to know today, but once again, my brain was constantly learning different skills. I often saw my father take a phone call from someone wanting a six-foot high kangaroo, or a four-foot tall koala bear and then watched him create the desired product as a one-off.

In addition to running the factory, my father was an SP bookmaker. Although this was an illegal activity in the ‘50s and ‘60s, there was no shortage of people wanting to place bets on the dogs, the trots and the gallops. In those days, there were no mobile phones of course – every home had just one phone, and on race days, ours ran hot. I think in hindsight, although I

have absolutely no interest in gambling, that growing up in this environment taught me to be a risk-taker. **And I firmly believe that taking risks is a critical part of true creativity.**

From Original Thought To End Product – Creating The Information Empire Model

In 1992, I took a leap of faith and launched a speaking business. At the time, I was running a women's network in Sydney, and had also worked in sales roles for a couple of unethical companies, struggling with their 'promise good, deliver lousy' attitude.

I joined the National Speakers Association of Australia (NSAA), worked my way up the accreditation chain, received awards, and gradually built a reputation as a Global Networking Specialist. This involved lots of national and international travel, and so in 2002, I started to wonder what speakers did to generate income once the time came to retire. My way has always been to seek out whoever is doing what I want to do or learn, study with them if possible, and create my version of whatever it is that has sparked my interest. So, looking for different models within the speaking business, I spoke to lots of Australian speakers, seeking that elusive 'passive streams of income' model. At the time, I was considered to be somewhat ahead of the pack, as I had books, CDs and videos to sell on-line and 'back of room' (at conference and seminar venues following one's presentation).

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At the time, I happened to be subscribing to a regular e-zine from Mark Victor Hansen, of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* fame. He was promoting a Mega Book Marketing University in California – a specific three-day event – and I happened to have those days free. I remember paying a fortune for my airline ticket, as I could only spare four days out of Australia at the time, but I knew intuitively that it was the right decision to go to this event. On the first night of this intensive three-day event, involving over 400 people, including just two Australians, Mark mentioned that there were 68 possible streams of income other than speaking. My ears pricked up, and I quickly made a note of that point. Wow, 68 streams of income – I wondered what they were. The next lady who spoke also mentioned those 68 streams of income, and how her company could make them available for what I worked out to be around A\$100,000.

I knew I had the answer – I just didn't know what I knew.

So I returned to Australia, and went to the NSAA national conference. I was so excited to be able to tell my speaker mates that there were 68 streams of income other than speaking, and of course somebody asked the obvious question: 'What are they, Robyn?' I told him that I didn't know, but as soon as I did, I would let him know. And so that became my task for the next 90 days. Every time I read a newspaper, magazine, trade journal or book, watched a television show or surfed the Internet, I looked for things that could possibly be included in an 'information empire'.

My research was based on the principle that people pay to hear from information experts, not speakers! Further, any topic

you were passionate about could have an information empire built around it. My A4 page of scribbled notes turned into an A3 page, and then into two A3 pages, until finally I felt that I had covered all the possible streams of income in an information empire model. Guess what? I had found close to 200 streams of income – over 130 more streams than I had been told was possible. And yet, had I never been told that there were 68 possible streams of income, I would never have started looking for those 68, let alone the 200 that I eventually found.

When I launched my Information Empire Model at the NSAA Spring Skills workshop in September 2002, I was so nervous. I knew in my heart that this model was the future of the speaking industry, but it was so revolutionary. What if I was laughed off the stage? I had shared the model with a few enthusiastic mates prior to the session, so I knew that if everyone else left, at least there would still be three people in the room. As it turned out, I would be lying if I said that all fifty people in the room were convinced, but a large majority were, and so I knew that my model was, and continues to be, a ground breaking tool within the speaking profession.

Since that workshop back in 2002, a number of people who were in the audience that day have adapted their speaking business to include multiple streams of income, as laid out in the Information Empire Model.

In 2007 I will be updating the model and the three-CD set that explains each of the steps, however in the meantime, for those who are interested in knowing what was included in the Information Empire Model, see over page.

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The INFORMATION EMPIRE MODEL included over 200 potential streams of passive income in the following categories:

1. Writing/Publishing
2. Template Creation
3. Creating Derivative Products
4. Fee For Service
5. Media Work
6. Distribution
7. Co-branding
8. Product Development
9. Speaking
10. Website Resource Centre
11. Research

Each category is created with the basic concept that all information, once learned or mastered, can be filtered into the marketplace in multiple ways – verbally, visually and electronically – by you or those you train or distribute the information through.

Not everyone wants to or will create an entire information empire or even a small information business. However, this is truly the potential of the written and spoken word in this information age.

If you're interested in purchasing the original wall poster and the three-CD pack, visit www.networkingtowin.com.au. If you would like to be notified when the revised model is released, email robyn@networkingtowin.com.au.

Global Book Distribution

My current project, and one I am slowly perfecting, is to revolutionise the distribution of books from authors to readers. The traditional bookstore model involves three additional layers a book must pass through to travel from the author to the reader. From the author, the book moves to the publisher, then to the distributor, then on to the bookstore, and finally to the reader. Every layer takes their cut of the retail price, which goes a long way towards explaining why books are generally considered to be relatively expensive.

One alternative model involves readers buying books direct from the author. Obviously, each party needs to know where the other is located, and how best to reach them, and the Internet has certainly opened up the possibilities of such a model.

Another model involves the author aligning themselves with organisations who want to reach a particular readership. Let's take a closer look at how that might work.

An Example Of Innovative Book Distribution

Supermarkets are a great place to obtain creative stimulation, particularly if it is a different supermarket to the one you normally visit, so that there's a certain level of discomfort or unfamiliarity.

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I recently purchased a Greens low GI apple and blueberry muffin mix. On the front of the 100% Australian recycled box, there was a big sign – ‘FREE Aussie Chomps mini-book in this pack. Collect all FIVE! Books are 64 pages’.

Now I have to confess, the book was not the deal-breaker for me. I was actually very excited about finding a low GI cake mix. When I opened the pack, out dropped a mini-book, *BOOTS AND ALL*, by Sherryl Clark, bearing the message that ‘Greens and Sherryl Clark are proud to encourage kids to read with the Greens Aussie Chomps mini-book series’. At the back of the mini-book, Greens had included two recipes – one for a Pizza Muffin and one for a Lemony Buttercake. Both these recipes call for the use of another Greens product.

Some readers might think this is a cynical marketing exercise, and yes, perhaps it is, but I think it is evidence of some very creative thinking, and a great example of innovative book distribution.

So how many models for international book distribution are there? Maybe there are 100, maybe 1000, maybe there are 10,000 – who knows, maybe even 100,000. What I know for sure though is that if I am not prepared to take some risks, to constantly move out of my comfort zone, to experiment, to fail sometimes and to learn from those failures, to surround myself with creative, ‘bright spark’ mates, I will never know for sure how many book distribution models there really are.

Let's pretend for a moment that there are no bookstores, and you were the author of a book just like this one. How would YOU make contact with, and sell your books to, your potential readers. If you think you have a solution, or have some thoughts on alternate book distribution models and you would like to receive a complimentary copy of the ebook *How to write and sell ebooks*, by Robyn Henderson and Gihan Perera, email your idea to: robyn@networkingtowin.com.au.

What I Know For Sure About Creative Thinking

- **I know that we need stimulation to get the ideas flowing** – this may come from something as simple as a walk on the beach, reading a magazine, visiting an art gallery, or having a stimulating conversation with friends or strangers – anything can do it for you.

When I knew it was time to start my writing for this book, I visited Bunnings, the major hardware retailer. 'Why Bunnings?' I hear you ask? Well, I find Bunnings, or any other large hardware stores for that matter, filled with innovation and creativity, whether it's the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) section, where they offer all sorts of classes and interesting materials to work with, or the gardening section, where there seems to be an endless supply of creative inventions. Yesterday, I saw a vertical wheelbarrow made of heavy plastic, similar to a wheelie bin (without the lid) but circular, with a sloping edge

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and a handle to push or pull the barrow along. The key feature however was that the barrow was vertical, and easier to manoeuvre than the traditional horizontal design. What a smart idea – and it was retailing for less than \$40. Then I saw a square bucket – not revolutionary, but not traditional either, and obviously designed by someone with a need for something other than a round bucket.

- **I believe that some of the best creative thoughts and inventions are driven by necessity** – here is a problem; how can we solve it? What materials are available for us to use? Do other people have this problem? What will someone pay for this item?
- **Travelling can also stimulate creativity** – and it doesn't have to be international travel. Even visiting an unfamiliar suburb thirty minutes from where you live can do it. I have found that anywhere that takes me out of my familiar territory for an extended length of time can really ignite those creative sparks.
- **Food is another creativity trigger** – try a new restaurant, a new cuisine, a new recipe, visit Chinatown or Little Italy (if these are not local areas for you) or the farmers' market, anywhere where the food is different and you don't have the safety net of a shopping list with your staple ingredients.
- **I know that when I'm stressed, I'm rarely creative** – because I am not breathing as deeply as possible,

and I am totally focussed in my head rather than in my heart. I am not present, because I am worrying about something that has happened or something that might happen. Both are a waste of energy, but at the time, my stressed state cannot differentiate.

- **Mastermind groups are a great way of stimulating creative thinking.** Make sure you take an open mind to the group. I know that some of the most 'out there' ideas are sometimes just too outrageous, but once it's been stretched to outrageous, your mind can then come back a little to fit your circumstances, although it need not bounce all the way back to mainstream thinking. The more you are prepared to shift out of your comfort zone, the more creative you will become.

The Power of Mastermind Groups

One of the biggest challenges people face today is the shortage of unbiased, knowledgeable people to bounce ideas around with. What we are often looking for is a devil's advocate – someone who challenges our thinking, while supporting us and stretching us to think beyond our self-imposed limitations.

Many smart networkers have tapped into the power of creating a regular mastermind or brainstorming group. They use this group as a sounding board for new ideas, innovations, business challenges and, in many cases, informal mentorship. And when it's well planned and organised, it can be a win-win

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for all the members, not just you. Good planning is critical, so let's look at a seven-point checklist for setting up a successful mastermind group:

1. Every mastermind group needs a driver – an organiser. Since it's your idea, you automatically become the organiser. First, you will need to decide what you want to achieve from the mastermind group. Make a list of at least five things you hope to achieve from regular meetings with a specific group. You may also consider the option of holding irregular mastermind meetings, where you come together with a specific need at a specific time.

2. Next, list 10 things that you are able to offer a potential mastermind group. Dig deep here – maybe you can create business connections, introduce potential prospects, cross-network your suppliers, or provide the venue, the refreshments or the transport, not to mention your expertise. Ideally, if you have four potential members, each will contribute different things.

Don't overcommit with your list – be realistic about time, money and energy.

3. Now you need a list of prospective members for the group – people you know and trust, ideally people who work outside your profession or industry. This will ensure that they bring fresh ideas to the group, rather than an attitude of 'This is how we've always done it'. As you may encounter rejection from some of these potential members, it is best to list at least 10 people as prospective members. You are looking for 4–5

people with similar values and ethics who may have different ways of thinking and expressing themselves, but are known to be honest, reliable, professional and good communicators.

4. Create a time line showing when you will: make contact with the prospects; prepare a brief outline of the outcomes you hope to achieve with the group; meet for the first time (at a time that suits everyone); and review the success of the group (i.e. specify a trial period). Basically, you are preparing the mastermind plan that you will present to the prospects. The more prepared you are, the more your prospects will be inclined to say yes.

5. Work out your ROI – return on investment – for the group. Let's look at potentially meeting with the group twice a month for one hour each time:

Meeting time:	1 hour
Travel to and from venue:	2 hours
Action to be taken post-event:	2 hours
Total:	5 hours per meeting x 2 meetings per month.

*We are then looking at 10 hours per month x 11 months
(allowing for holidays), a total commitment of
110 hours per annum.*

If your charge-out rate is \$250 per hour, this equates to a total cost of \$27,500 (substitute your own charge-out rate as applicable).

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So at a charge-out rate of \$250 per hour, it is going to cost you \$27,500 and 2.75 weeks of your time (based on a 40-hour week) to participate in this mastermind group over the next 12 months.

You can see why it's important to take the time to plan the mastermind group, choose participants wisely, set rules, and hold people accountable. Is every person on your list worth 2.75 weeks of your time over the next 12 months?

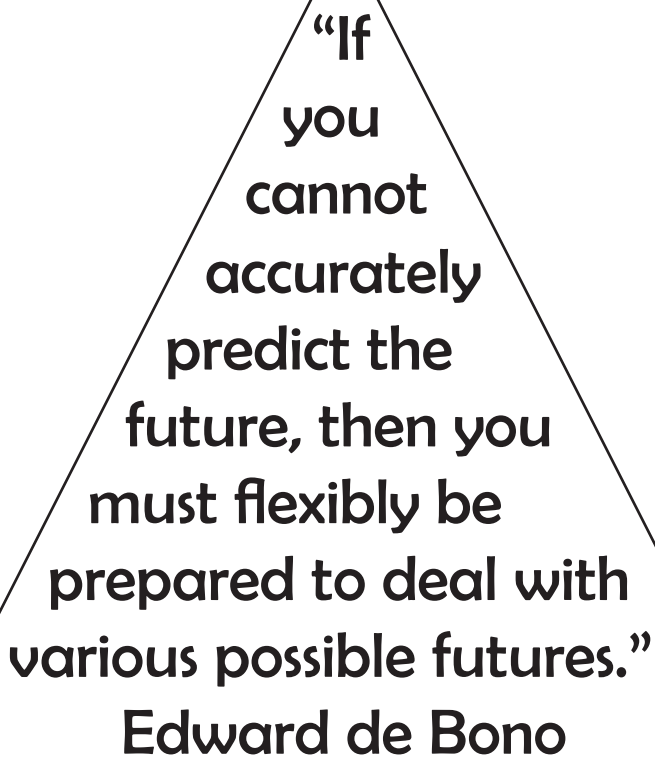
6. Many potential mastermind groups do not proceed beyond this point, as the organiser throws in the towel, deciding that it's all too hard, and they don't have that much time to spare. If you find yourself in this position, consider scheduling a single, slightly longer, meeting each month. Always keep in mind your ROI however, and aim for quality, not quantity.

7. After preparing a one or two-page summary of your mastermind outline, make contact with your prospects and ask if you can forward the outline to them. Make sure to include the first proposed meeting date. Don't take it personally if they reject your offer – better to have an early rejection than an overcommitted participant.

Never assume anything. Clarify everything, and don't be afraid to state the obvious.

If you treat your mastermind group as a business relationship, nurture it, make regular contact between meetings, and regularly think of ways to enhance the relationship, your ROI will far outweigh the initial effort required to put this powerful network together.

Finally, you must be prepared to make mistakes – and realise that it's okay to make mistakes. Without mistakes, you'll never create anything. How can you – you're not trying anything different.



**“If
you
cannot
accurately
predict the
future, then you
must flexibly be
prepared to deal with
various possible futures.”
Edward de Bono**

Q & A

Sonia Muir

In your current role, what types of creative work do you do, and how do you get to the point where lots of creative ideas start to flow? What sorts of things can get your creative juices flowing?

My current position with the NSW Department of Primary Industries Rural Women's Network primarily involves interacting with women across New South Wales. This often involves working behind the scenes on policy work, which relies more on strategic thinking, in parallel with community-based projects, where I have more freedom to explore innovation. I have a background in art education, so creative processes come naturally, and I like to incorporate experiential activities in most things that I do, whether running a workshop or speaking to groups. I use visualisation to prepare myself for any event or activity, and keep myself up-to-date with new ideas and approaches by tapping into current resources, attending workshops and conferences, and surrounding myself with creative people, both at work and in my life in general.

What is the most innovative idea, project or system you have seen in the Australian or global marketplace in the last 12 months?

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I discovered 'appreciative inquiry' at a conference, and have tried to use this approach in a few workshops as a positive way of approaching strategic planning.

Have you every made a magnificent mistake that resulted in a great idea or opportunity for you?

I have made lots of 'mistakes', but I don't call them that... they are more about learning. I can't think of one particular 'magnificent mistake', but I am not afraid to take risks and try new things. Sometimes they work and sometimes they don't, but unless you try, then you may be missing out on an incredibly useful tool.

On a global basis, what creative and innovative minds do you admire and why?

I admire Mary Robinson, the first woman President of Ireland (1990-1997), United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002), and now chair of the Council of Women World Leaders and the Ethical Globalization Initiative. Mary has an ability to inspire others and to make a difference by connecting with global policy-makers as well as with people at the grassroots level.

**Sonia Muir is the Coordinator of
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“There are now more markets and partners for Australian innovators than at any other time in history. And there is certainly no reason why Australia should not expect to be part of a high-performance economy today.”

Thomas Barlow, author of *The Australian Miracle* - an innovative nation revisited

The World's 25 Most Innovative Companies

Business Week-Boston Consulting Group survey

2006	2005	Company	Why
1	1	Apple	Hello, Ipod world. Outstanding design and innovation software platforms create an unrivalled user experience.
2	8	Google	Allows one of the world's brightest crops of engineers time to experiment. Focuses on simplicity and the customer.
3	2	3M	Revamped its vaunted R&D labs in 2003 to centralise basic research. With new CEO George Buckley, an engineer is back at the helm.

4	14	Toyota	A master of manufacturing innovation and now, hybrid technology. New cost-cutting strategy calls for reducing vehicle systems costs as a whole
5	3	Microsoft	Primes Windows and Office sales with innovations. A new combo of web and PC services, called Live, is off to a solid start.
6	3	General Electric	Transforming from an efficiency powerhouse to one that values bold ideas. Now rates managers on traits such as imagination and courage.

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7	9	Procter & Gamble	Its 'connect and develop' model calls for 50pc of new products to come from outside. Design and innovation execs are now part of the organisational chart.
8	9	Nokia	Global handset leader. Diverse teams create future-oriented 'world maps' to track macro trends. Designed cheap phones for emerging markets.
9	19	Starbucks	Would you like a movie with your latte? The creator of the \$3 coffee has started marketing films. Taps an army of baristas for customer insights.

10	7	IBM	Donated 500 of its more than 40,000 patents to help build new technology ecosystems. Co-invests in projects with clients and partners.
11	11	Virgin	Adds its hip lifestyle brand to everything from airlines to insurance. Enters new businesses at lightning speed.
12	12	Samsung	An intense design focus, speedy product cycles and rigorous metrics make the South Korean company a creative force in electronics.

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13	5	Sony	Fell eight spots this year. It is trying to claw its way back with a focus on high-definition products and a revamped management structure.
14	6	Dell	Fell eight spots this year. It revolutionised the PC supply chain and sales channels, but is stuck in Apple's shadow.
15	18	IDEO	Designed the Palm V and Leap chair. Now helps some of the biggest companies learn design thinking and transform their cultures.
16	20	BMW	Brings teams together to collaborate inside an innovative research centre. Sets up competitions between designers for new car models.

17	16	Intel	Expanding beyond microprocessors and outside the PC. Poised to launch more products in 2006 than at any time in its history.
18	15	eBay	Built the world's largest online marketplace and a new way of doing business. Launching a fixed-price site to cater to busy consumers.
19	New	IKEA	A focus on affordable design and a different retail experience have turned the Swedish retailer's shoppers into cult fans.

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20	13	Wal-Mart	Wields technology and pioneers processes to streamline its supply chain. A beleaguered image may have prompted its seven-spot fall.
21	16	Amazon	Continuously focuses on improving the online experience. Ramping up R&D spending on search and web services for outside merchants.
22	New	Target	Embraced design as a differentiator in the discount market. Creative marketing and temporary stores surprise devoted customers.
23	23	Honda	Known for excellent engineering, Honda is thinking outside the car, launching solar cell production for homes and businesses next year.

24	New	Research in Motion	Breakthrough mobile devices changed the way business communicates. Dominates the wireless email market.
25	21	Southwest Airlines	Created the low-cost airline model through operational innovation. Developed fare marketing software for consumers' desktops.

Methodology

The Business Week-Boston Consulting Group 2006 senior management survey on innovation was distributed electronically to executives worldwide in early 2006. In February, surveys were sent to the 1500 largest global corporations as determined by market capitalisation in US dollars, with instructions to distribute the survey to their top 10 executives. The survey was also accessible on several web sites: The BCG Innovation Institute, Business Week, Knowledge@ Wharton, and the Nightly Business Report. Survey participation was voluntary and anonymous, and the

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survey closed in April. The survey consisted of 19 general questions on innovation and a further eight optional questions that focused on innovation metrics. A total of 1070 executives answered the survey. Of those, 46 percent were from North America, 30 percent from Europe, and 16 percent from Asia or the Pacific region. To avoid vote-stuffing, respondents were asked to identify the most innovative company outside of their own industry.

(Source: The Business Week-Boston Consulting Group
Weekend Australian Financial Review June 9-12, 2006,
page 47)

Q & A

Ralph Kerle

Can you describe what creativity means to you, and how it has shaped your life?

I am fortunate in that every position I have held during my career has been driven by a creative imperative. Since leaving the Victorian College of the Arts as a drama graduate, I have worked as a comedian, a cabaret owner, a theatre creator, producer and director, an events designer, a TV producer, a director of television commercials, and a writer and journalist. I am also a photographer, and I have written, directed and produced a musical that starred Marcia Hines, Tina Arena and Mark Williams, although I'm not a musician. All my occupations have required me to produce creatively on a daily basis, and nearly always to deadlines.

A personal trust in, and the continual development of, the initial processes I learnt at Art College are what have sustained and driven me.

Drama School provided me with a whole range of processes and techniques that became the tools of my trade, just as a plumber would receive during his apprenticeship. The experience of the exploration and application of these processes and techniques, and the subsequent discarding, adaptation and re-invention and re-design of them in my own

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way have provided me with the creative basis for my work. Creativity is the process.

A theatrical apprenticeship is the ultimate training for applied creativity. It involves the exploration and application of the entire range of the aesthetic senses. The playwright constructs a text that is like a plan for a house. The director, the architect for the house of theatre, then engages a team of designers to create the environment – the musicians, singers and actors, whatever is required to build this home. Each and every one of these skilled professionals works to satisfy the writer's intent in the course of their own creative journey.

Every human sense and perception is engaged at the deepest level of creative design to enable the birth of a built world of humanity.

In this sense, creativity is both inspiration and implementation. Ideas do not represent creativity. It is in the manifestation of ideas where creativity lies. Ideas that are not manifest have no capital or reality.

I always start with a blank page or canvas, an empty mind. I await an impulse that I know will always come. Of this, I never have any doubt. And as soon as it comes, I start writing, composing or designing. As the work starts to take shape, I will notice distractions, different ideas on different themes arriving and departing, entering, disrupting, interfering with or informing my creative flow. As these images and ideas occur, I analyse and capture them in the flow. They may or may not stay with me.

What I am always doing with my work in a creative sense is trying to find my authentic voice, so that the intent of the creative idea is truly served, no matter what that idea might be.

An authentic voice is nearly always found in the beauty of the idea manifest. As you look at the work from a cognitive and aesthetic framework, you know it works. It is not ugly, it doesn't jar, and it is not excessive in any context. Others perceive the beauty in it as well, even though it might be an image of a horrifically mutilated bombing victim, or a horse in full gallop along a deserted beach.

It is the search for this authentic voice that can never be fully known, that is never static, never constant, never reliable, that makes creativity such a paradoxical, awe-inspiring, meditative, and curious journey.

**Ralph Kerle is CEO of the
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Author Biographies



Robyn Henderson

Global Networking Specialist Robyn Henderson has authored, published and contributed to nineteen books on networking, self-promotion and self-esteem building.

She has spoken in eleven countries, presents over 150 times each year, and has never advertised. All her work comes from networking, referrals and her website.

Her career includes over 15 years as a professional speaker, 10 years in sales and telemarketing management and 13 years in hospitality.

Based on the far north coast of NSW, Robyn successfully launched Sea Change Publishing in 2004, to coincide with her move to the region. With a tagline of making the impossible possible, Robyn believes that everyone has at least one book in them, and one of her goals is to show others how to write and self-publish books on their passions and causes.

In 2005 Robyn opened a Sea Change Publishing office in the USA.

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Emma Robertson

Associate Professor Emma Robertson creates and researches across two distinct areas. In her teaching she investigates theories of mapping, and new developments in creative thinking processes as applied to design and management. In her artistic practice she explores the relationships between words, objects and memory in mixed media drawings and book works. Her artwork is in five public collections in three countries, including the Hospital Trust for Scotland.

In 2006 Emma was one of seven prizewinners in the 5th International Biennial of Drawing in Europe. She curated the exhibition *The Artistic Construction of Memory* on behalf of the School of Psychology, in support of the 4th International Conference on Memory (ICOM4, 2006).

Emma wrote and teaches the online Creative Thinking Processes course at the University of NSW, and she also lectures in the multi-disciplinary Bachelor of Design Degree. She has a particular interest in community engagement, and has recently completed a research project through the Academic Women in Leadership Program. She has helped organise, and contributed artwork to, the Amnesty International Art Auction.

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Karen Smith

Horticulture is definitely Karen's passion. With three young sons, she managed to juggle work and family to gain her qualifications as a horticulturist. She has worked in many aspects of the industry to increase her knowledge and 'hands on' skills, juggling two or three jobs at once. Karen's philosophy is that to gain a thorough understanding of your craft you need to work at all levels "from the ground up!"

After many years working for larger companies as an advisor and trainer, she decided to become self-employed as the owner-operator of Gardens on the Go. Her creative skills enable her to design and install new gardens, as well as offering a "Potted Gifts" service to individuals and the corporate sector.

She is a columnist for local magazines and newspapers, and is an executive committee member for Rendezvous Business Women's Network.

"Being involved in all aspects of your industry and your community is a large part of building your creativity".

□ W: www.gardensonthego.com.au



Dr Irena Yashin-Shaw PhD
CEO - Creating the Edge Training
Managing Director - Speaking Edge

Irena is an accomplished and award-winning professional speaker, entrepreneur and academic. She empowers people, teams and organisations to think creatively and present themselves professionally and persuasively. With a PhD in Creative

Thinking and a Masters Degree in Adult Education, Irena knows how to propel people beyond existing possibilities. She is someone who enjoys pushing the boundaries of the comfort zone, and helps others to do the same so they can unlock their potential. She practices what she preaches, being equally at home delivering a university lecture, a keynote speech, seminars, executive workshops or stand-up comedy.

As a conference speaker, Irena has addressed international audiences in Europe, the UK, Russia, China, India and Australia. She currently combines her work in private enterprise with her academic position as Senior Research Fellow Adjunct in the Centre for Learning Research at Griffith University.

Through her two companies, *Creating the Edge Training* and *Speaking Edge*, Irena offers a range of services and programs aimed at capacity building.

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