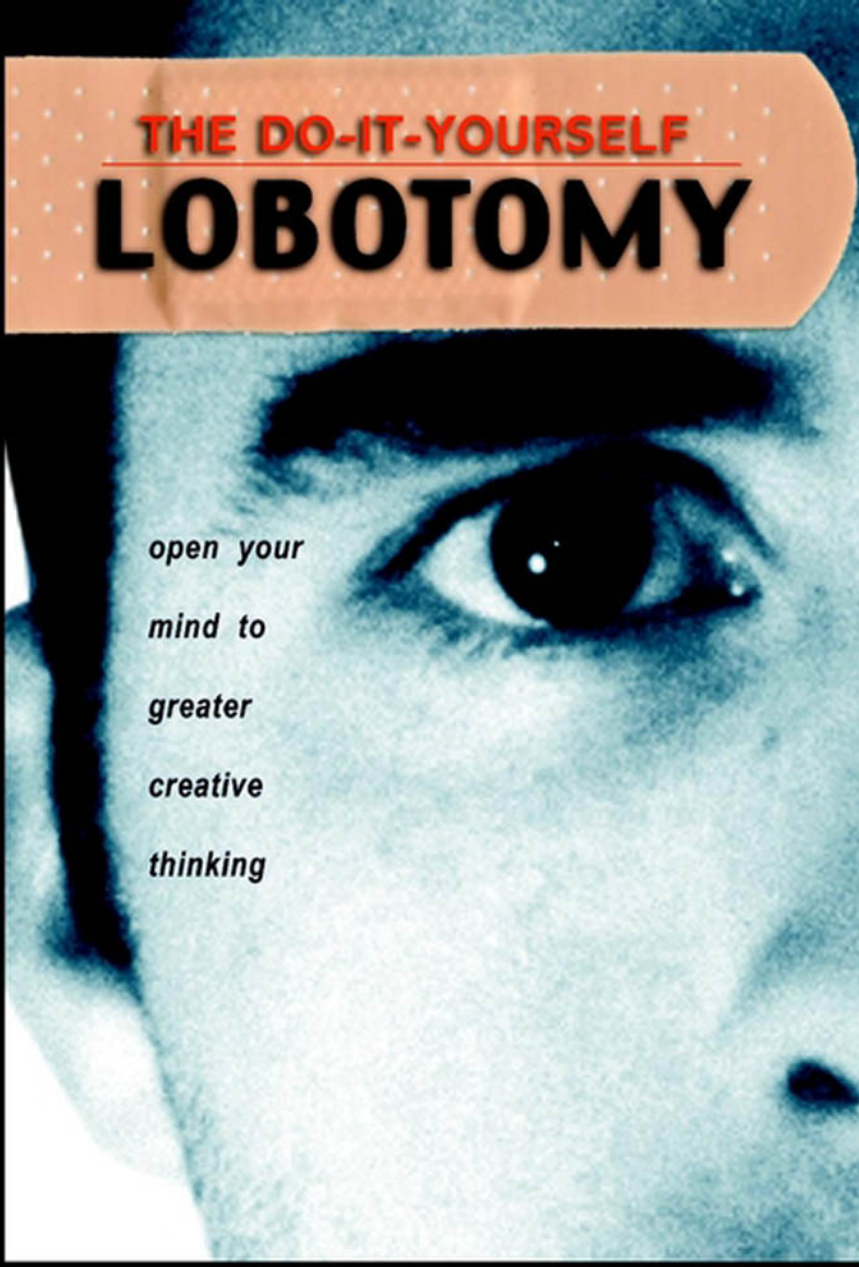
THE DO-IT-YOURSELF LOBOTOMY



open your mind to greater creative thinking

AN ADWEEK BOOK

tom monahan *creative thinking coach*

THE DO-IT-YOURSELF LOBOTOMY

Open Your Mind to Greater Creative Thinking

Tom Monahan

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

THE DO-IT-YOURSELF LOBOTOMY

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THE DO-IT-YOURSELF LOBOTOMY

Open Your Mind to Greater Creative Thinking

Tom Monahan

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

This book is dedicated to
the five most important people in my life: my wife,
my best friend, my honey, my partner, and my soul mate.

Of course, that would be Audrey.

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This title is also available in print as ISBN 0-471-41742-4. Some content that appears in the print version of this book may not be available in this electronic edition.

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Contents

PART I.
What Do Great Ideas Do? 1

Introduction 3

How This Book Works 21

The Rewards of a Great Idea 28

The Consequences of a Bad Idea 32

1. **The First Real Chapter (Finally!)** 36

PART II.
Understanding and Demystifying Creativity 47

2. **Creativity = Problem Solving** 49
3. **Change Your Thinking about Change** 57
4. **Creativity versus Talent** 62

PART III.
Tools for the Job of Thinking Creatively 71

5. **Ask a Better Question** 75
6. **Ask the Question Early** 87
7. **100 MPH Thinking: Thinking at the Speed of Enlightenment** 90

8. **180° Thinking: A Tnereffid Way to Ideate** 99
9. **Intergalactic Thinking** 107
10. **Collaborate with Genius** 121
11. **Conceptual Solitaire** 128
12. **How to Put These Tools to Work** 132

PART IV.
Dimensionalizing Your New Creative Tools 139

13. **Aids to Creativity** 141
14. **Accidental Genius** 147
15. **Stop Making Sense** 155
16. **Redefining the Acceptable Range** 160
17. **Selling Creative Ideas Requires Its Own Creativity** 167
18. **Mind Farming** 186
19. **Storming the Brain** 206
20. **The Five Greatest Barriers to Creativity** 217
21. **The Real Bibliography** 224
22. **Proceed with Passion** 228

Afterword 233
Appendix 238
Acknowledgments 261
Index 263

PART I

What Do Great Ideas Do?

Introduction

Ideas First!

One thing is certain:

> *To survive, to thrive in business in the twenty-first century you need to be a potent idea generator.*

Whether you're in advertising, high finance, technology, funeral management, or any other field, every big idea that has ever helped your industry was the result of creative thinking. Every solution to every real problem has come from a new idea. Every triumph over every challenge and every gain from every opportunity has been the result of an individual stretching her or his gray matter to a new and valuable place.

Great ideas are the root of just about everything new. Every new product, service improvement, cost savings, and efficiency idea has come from human creativeness. Every market-conquering, competition-smashing concept behind every advancement is the result of someone thinking of something that has not been thought of before.

The vital, urgent need for constant creative thinking is as pervasive in industry today as computer terminals and interminable meetings.

Creative thinking is no longer the domain of a chosen few or something companies do only at their annual planning meetings or in brainstorming sessions. Creative thinking is something that high-functioning people at leading companies do constantly, because there is always an opportunity for improvement. Today, with the pace of change constantly increasing in business, there is always a need to maintain a competitive advantage. Companies and individuals both need to stay on top of their game.

So where do creative ideas come from? Well . . . people. The freshest, biggest ideas come from leaders in your own industry and other industries. Ideas also come from the customers and users of your goods or services. And if your company is a player to any degree and you're doing your job, creative ideas come from *you.* (If you're a manager doing your job, they also come from your people.)

Now is the time to ask yourself, "What am I doing to enable myself and/or my people to generate the vital business-building ideas that fuel my company's, my clients', and our customers' success?"

Take a second to let that question sink in.

Now answer honestly, "What are you doing, now, to become a better idea generator?"

> *If you're not making a concerted effort to value, master, and inspire creative thinking and improve your skill set in this area, you may find yourself losing out to the competition.*

If you don't actively grease the skids of innovation and better handle the rapidity and magnitude of change today, you could be cheating yourself and your employer out of an incredible resource. You could be holding back your company and your career.

Fresh ideas are the lubrication for growth and success in business. Whether it's creative marketing ideas, breakthrough advertising ideas, customer service ideas, or fresh thinking in a thousand other areas, the most successful people in business are making themselves active players in this high-stakes, high-value game.

You're reading this book because you want to improve yourself in this area. I can help you. As a professional creative thinking coach I work with thousands of people in dozens of industry segments annually to help them improve their understanding and skills in this critical

area. My experience tells me that it's helpful early on in this self-development process to take a quick personal inventory of your current state of creativeness.

Self-Assessment for Self-Improvement

How potent is your idea power? Are you and/or your people able to come up with an abundance of tremendously creative ideas when you need them with little effort or pain? Dozens of ideas? Hundreds of ideas? Thousands of ideas? Well, there's a lot more method to this madness than most people realize (or perhaps, madness to the method). And it's surprisingly easy to accomplish.

To help make this learning process more meaningful and therefore more effective for you individually, here are some self-diagnostic tools.

The 2-minute Creative IQ Test, page 238. (Or for a more interactive version go to www.Do-It-YourselfLobotomy.com/book.) By "Creative IQ" I mean your *imagination quotient.* I have developed this assessment tool to help people determine the areas in which they are already strong creatively and those that need improvement—and how much. This quick little test, taken by thousands of people, has been developed and refined based on a great deal of feedback. It's the most popular page at my web site. I have gotten hundreds of comments from people telling me how they have used this little tool to better understand their creative strengths and weaknesses so they can take charge of their self-improvement in this area. I suggest you take this short test before you get too far along in the book. The assessment will help you focus on the chapters that will benefit you most.

The 2-minute Organizational Creative IQ Test, page 246. (Or go to www.Do-It-YourselfLobotomy.com/book.) This quick diagnostic tool is for assessing the creative health of the people in your organization as a group. If you're a manager reading this book as much to help you bring out creativity in the people you supervise as for your own professional and personal development, this little test is well worth a look. It will help you better understand areas that need to be worked on at an organizational level, whether they be team, department, division, or company.

Creative ForceField Analysis, page 251. (Or for a more interactive version go to www.Do-It-YourselfLobotomy.com/book.) This self-diagnostic tool will help you identify factors that encourage creativeness in your life on the positive side of your "Creative ForceField" and those that prevent or limit creativity on the negative side. In my years as a consultant, I have used this tool often to assess individuals and organizations. We almost always use it as a road map to help us identify the stuck places before doing our work together. We sometimes use the exact same tool after the professional development work to identify the positive shifts that were made. Again, I suggest you use this tool to create a benchmark of sorts before you get too far along in the book. I suggest you do it again, or just edit your original version, after you've read the book. You'll be amazed at how much awareness alone can help increase your creative forcefield. You can do it as an individual or to assess your organization's Creative ForceField.

KNOWLEDGE VS POWER

This book is about empowerment. But not in the touchy-feely 1980s sense of giving yourself permission to be your best self, although you certainly had better be doing that. True empowerment means giving yourself the understanding and resources to make major contributions to your industry, your company, and your self-worth.

> *The great irony of the information age is that knowledge is not as powerful as it used to be.*

There was a time on this planet when only a few people had knowledge, and they held the power. The monarchy, the church, the aristocracy—those few who had the knowledge and education had the power. Today we are a more educated society. And what we don't know we can often find out with the click of a mouse. Just a few short years ago in the halls of business we often heard the term *proprietary information.* What's proprietary today? And for how long? All companies have access to the same information.

What Kind of Thinker Do You Want to Be?

Do you want to be the kind of thinker who comes up with the idea of a personal computer with a larger hard drive and faster processor just like everyone else was doing in the late 1990s? Or do you want to be the kind of thinker who comes up with the idea that made iMac the top selling personal computer for two years running? It wasn't faster. It wasn't bigger. It was blue. Excuse me, blueberry.

Do you want to be a thinker who develops one more in a long line of shampoos that gives your hair "longer-lasting body?" Or do you want to be the thinker who understands that people standing in a shower wait impatiently for the gooey shampoo to come out of a bottle and decides to put the cap on the *bottom* of the bottle, like Pantene?

Do you want to be the thinker who comes up with one more commercial for a high-technology company that talks about "integrating your IT services"? Or do you want to be the thinker who decides to show nuns speaking French on American TV, discussing their processor speed and hard drive size and making one of the largest, monolithic companies in the world, IBM, seem down-to-earth by offering "solutions for a small planet"?

Do you want to be the thinker who comes up with one more variety of packaged guacamole, loaded with artery-clogging fat like all the

An easy-to-recognize example of 180° Thinking (see page 99).

other avocado-based guacamole? Or do you want to be a thinker who asks, "Does guacamole have to be made from avocado?" then goes on to use asparagus as the main ingredient to invent a great-tasting no-fat guacamole like Espárrago zesty asparagus guacamole?

Do you want to be one more in a long line of aerospace engineers who thinks of a way to make jets faster? Or do you want to be the thinker whose huge idea finally made the Stealth bomber virtually invisible to radar? An idea that wasn't about technology. An idea that wasn't about aerodynamics. An idea that was about slowing down the speed of the craft so that the heat output would be diminished to an acceptable non-radar-reflective point.

These are all examples of people who did not go with the flow of conventional thinking. Some who even defied the status quo. A computer that is not faster! Guacamole that doesn't contain any avocado! An advanced jet that functions best going slower!

Ideas like these and just about every other fresh concept that contributes to progress in every field of endeavor happen when people let go of what they "know," when they "lobotomize" the part of their brain that already has the "right" answer and come up with a better idea.

Are you ready to perform a Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy™?

❖

The power today goes to those who can act quickly on the knowledge by using new ideas to gain an edge—an edge that lets you lean back and enjoy its fruits for a very short time, as your competitors brainstorm to gain *their* edge.

That is the aim of this book. To truly empower your creative resourcefulness. To give you the ability to come up with as many big, fresh ideas as you wish, when you wish, with little effort or pain. To be able to think like the biggest thinkers in your field. To actually be a leader in your field.

Follow the advice, the lessons, and the methodologies in this book and you'll be better equipped than your competitors to deal with the challenges and convert the opportunities that face you every day. Because in business today, creativity is not a luxury—it is absolutely essential to success.

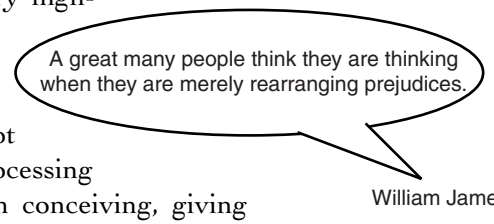
KNOWLEDGE VERSUS NEW IDEAS

You go to school, you gain knowledge. You join the workforce, you learn more. As you claw your way up the corporate ladder, you keep filling your mind with information—facts, data, understanding.

"Knowledge is power," you're told. Daily you strive to know as much about your field as possible to be competitive, to have an edge, to gain success.

But who gains the greatest success in business? Those who cram existing knowledge into their brains? Or those who generate the new ideas, the fresh thinking, the creative sparks that ignite new areas of business growth?

At a point in most every high-achieving professional's career he or she makes a profound discovery. The greatest success comes not from memorizing and processing other people's ideas, but in conceiving, giving birth to, and bringing to maturity their own ideas.



For many people, finding truly new ideas is not nearly as easy as it seems. Most people in business, while seeing the value of original thinking, find it extremely difficult to achieve. As a professional creative thinking coach, I understand this problem better than most people in business. I work with thousands of businesspeople annually: professionals in all corners of the corporate world and beyond, in Fortune 500 companies, in ad agencies of all sizes, in small firms, in professional organizations, one-on-one, and everywhere in between. I see that, in spite of their sincere intentions, most people are prisoners of what they know and are virtually helpless when it comes to generating new ideas. Their minds have become enslaved by traditional thinking: "the way it's done," "the tried and true," "the known." Their grooves of thought lead them to the same place time and again. The world around them is changing at breakneck speed, but they are stuck in the traps of old thinking patterns, being run over by those few players who are unattached to the old and are creating the new.

How the Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy Will Help You

The Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy will help you let go of your preconceptions, enabling you to have fresh ideas whenever you need or want them.

- First we help you better *understand creativity,* because you can't master something you don't truly understand. We cover some of the

fundamental concepts about creativeness that are sorely misunderstood:

Creativity = problem solving. We can either let problems be barriers or use them as springboards to be at our creative best when solving problems (see page 49).

Change. At best, most people go with the flow of change; at worst, they resist it. The high achievers *effect* change. You certainly can't avoid change, at least on this planet, today or ever (see page 57).

Creativity versus talent. These are very different notions. Not everyone is talented artistically. But everyone has the ability to have new ideas (see pag 62).

- Next we help you isolate the basic *creative thinking tools,* the methods and techniques used by the greatest thinkers since the beginning of time.

  Ask a Better Question™ (see page 75)

  100 MPH Thinking™ (see page 90)

  180° Thinking™ (see page 99)

  Intergalactic Thinking™ (see page 107)

- Finally, we help you gain deeper perspectives on *other aspects of creativity* to help you apply your new lessons to your job and life, to help you produce big ideas to fuel your success and that of your company.

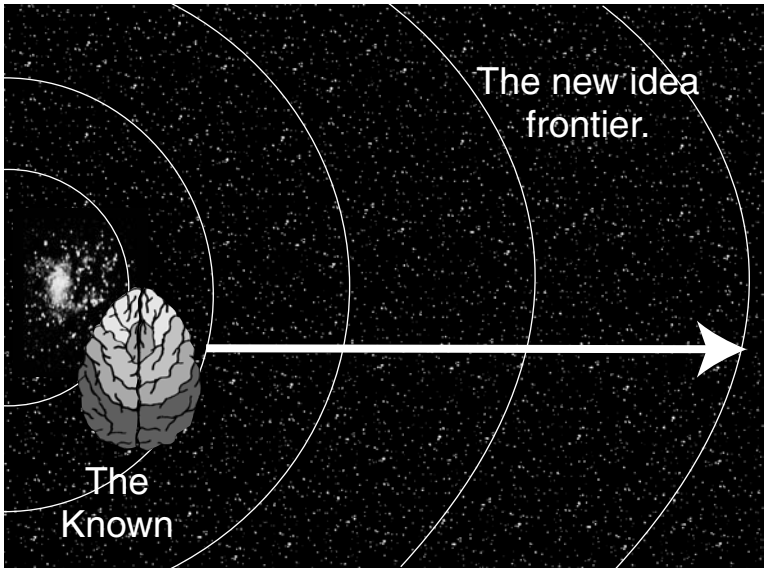
❖

THE CREATIVE EDGE (DOUBLE-EDGE, THAT IS)

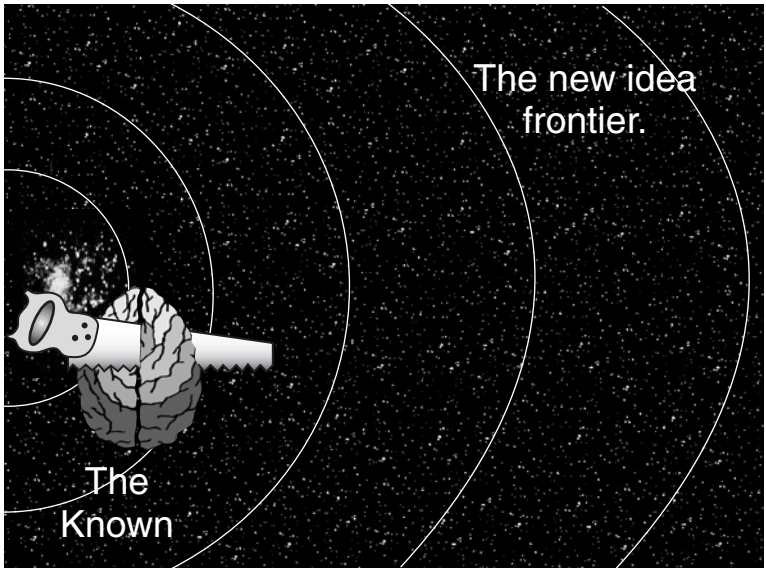
I've helped over 100,000 people in business to "grease their minds," in the words of one of my clients. In my corporate work, in both training and the applied-creativity world of brainstorm facilitation, I have worked with professionals in hundreds of companies, including Virgin Atlantic Airways, Hasbro, Frito-Lay, Texas Instruments, Benjamin Moore, and Capital One, as well as a large percentage of the top advertising agencies in the world. Through this work I have developed and refined ways to enable people to let go of what they know and to free their minds to discover new and better ways of doing their jobs, fueling their companies, and boosting their careers.

At the core of all of the work I do is a fun, fast-paced, precept-shattering workshop that I call "The Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy." That

How the Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy Works

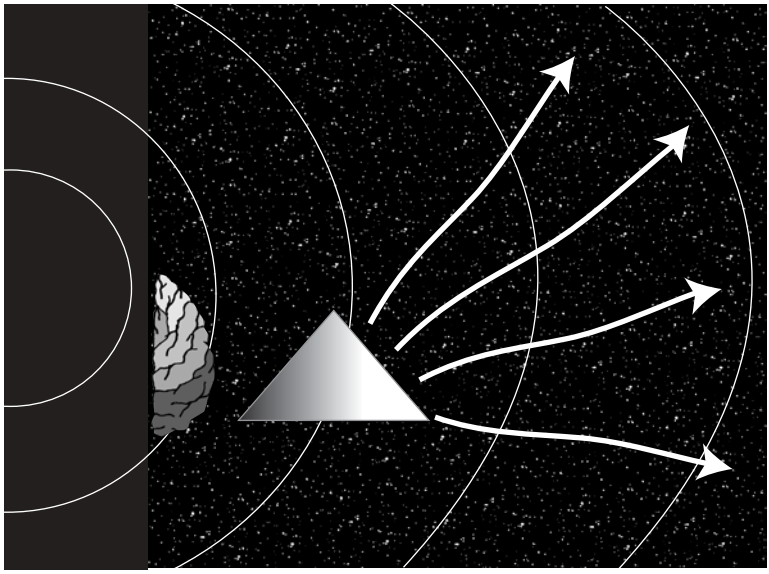


Conventional thinking and problem solving is like white light. By the very nature of logical, linear thinking, you illuminate only what you aim at.



The Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy helps you let go of what you know, what's holding you back from finding better ideas.

How the Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy Works



The Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy tools help refract linear thinking to give you a full spectrum of possibilities and much more colorful ideas (pun painfully noted).

workshop, the ongoing laboratory where I work, is the basis for this book, whose purpose is to bring this "lobotomizing" method to the legions of businesspeople looking for an edge in their professions, an edge created by opening their minds to new, bigger, better ideas to drive the companies they work for.

> *The sharp edge of creativity cuts both ways. It means putting yourself out there on the frontier. It means you could be wrong. You could fail.*

Creative thinking is the only way to make anything better, but its potential pitfalls make it a place where few people have the courage to go as far as they can go.

THE CREATIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE REST OF US

After a successful career as an advertising agency creative director, I left that idea-intensive business to become "creative director for the

I worked in advertising for 20 years before I became a creative thinking coach. I won many awards of which I am very proud. However, the honor that made my parents most proud came in 1990 when I became the youngest person featured in the *Wall Street Journal*'s long-running creative leaders campaign.

rest of us," to paraphrase the introduction of the Apple Macintosh as "the computer for the rest of us."

Having worked with some very smart people in corporate America, in companies such as Colgate-Palmolive, IBM, Gerber, Lotus, Keds, Polaroid, and Hewlett-Packard among many others, I noticed how paralyzed even the brightest people often were when it came to coming up with new ideas on demand. In the ad business I was used to maintaining an environment that helped my people generate hundreds of new ideas by next Thursday's deadline, but I saw the people in the corporate trenches too often struggle to find a few new ideas by next November. That's when I first got the notion to go into the business of helping corporate types open their minds. I've since found the methods in this book not only help stifled businesspeople but are effective thought stimulants for anyone looking for new ideas.

I'd made a career of studying what it takes to get people to come up with fresh, original ideas on demand. For 15 years I led a small ad agency in Providence, Rhode Island, to the pinnacle of this idea-rich business. In the 1980s I taught at the university level as well as for advertising professional organizations. In the 1990s I lectured on creative thinking for the two principal trade publications, *Adweek* and *AdAge,* as well as for the *Wall Street Journal* and over 50 local and

regional professional business organizations in the United States and abroad. And I wrote on the topic of creativity for one of the leading publications in the field, *Communication Arts*.

In the early 1990s I made a career shift into an emerging field in which I foresaw a great need—creative coaching. I left my job as president and executive creative director of my ad agency, Leonard/Monahan, to start Before & After, Inc.™, a company dedicated to helping people in business grow creatively. In the ensuing years I have worked for an impressive list of companies, among them Ralston Purina, Compaq, 3M, McDonald's, Southwest Airlines, Viacom, and many others. My workshops have taken me from Hong Kong to Iceland and many points in between. One thing that has become very clear to me is that creativity, both the term and the concept, has come out of the corporate closet. My first business cards read "Creative thinking and problem solving," because I sensed a reluctance on the part of clients and prospects to embrace the term *creativity*. Today the cards read "creativity in business," because more and more leaders at more and more companies see the need for fresh thinking to keep pace in today's fast-changing, dynamic business climate. The concept of "creativity in business" may still be viewed as an oxymoron, but it's out in the open.

> *Today, creativity, as a codified process and conscious skill set, is nearly as high on the corporate agenda as "Total Quality" was during that movement's emerging years.*

ADS BACKWARD

Originally, I set out to bring the secrets of creativity on demand from the ad business to the general business world, and I did just that, working with major companies in non-advertising-related areas right out of the gate. In the past few years, however, I have found that more and more advertising practitioners and the companies they work for have been using my company's services. Lately, it seems that the advertising business is being pressed to be more creative two basic ways, one from within the industry and one from outside. Inside, this historically competitive business has become even more competitive. The industry is undergoing greater change than at any time since the advent of the TV era. The beliefs and skills that carried the most successful people for years are being replaced by the ability to embrace new media options,

new marketing paradigms, and a whole new client mind-set. David Lubars, president of Fallon McElligott, says that one of his top priorities is helping his people recognize the new challenges of the ad business to bring greater understanding and value to their clients.

The forces outside the advertising business are just as dramatic. The business planning horizon is no longer measured year to year, and in many companies even quarter to quarter planning is too long term. Technology is allowing the leading companies to be more nimble and helping the followers to keep pace. Strategies that put companies on top of the heap, like Dell's "built to order" model, are knocked off overnight, and competitive edges become dull quicker than the safety razors at an army boot camp.

To those reading this book who are not in the advertising business, know that you will benefit greatly from my in-depth experience in this blisteringly fast-paced business sector whose principal product is ideas.

For those reading this book who *are* in the heat of the advertising industry, know that my forays into literally dozens of other business sectors over the past decade have given me insights into the creative process that can be leveraged in your idea-intensive business in a big way every day.

Sharp Tools with Strong Handles

The secret to the professional development process in this book is the tools. Through years of exploration and experimentation I have developed a number of creative thinking processes—Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy tools—that over 100,000 people have found to be extremely effective in helping them short-circuit their default mode of traditional thinking. These tools enable people to quickly and easily come up with fresh, exciting ideas whenever they need to. The tools are simple to learn and easy to use, partly because of their memorable, descriptive names, such as 100 MPH Thinking, 180° Thinking, Intergalactic Thinking, and Ask a Better Question.

The Indisputable Shift toward Creative Thinking

Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." This statement has never been more true. High technology is taking away so

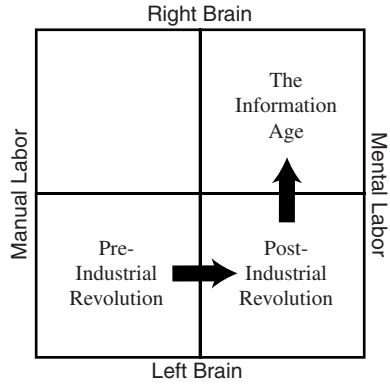
many left-brain tasks (toll takers, bank tellers, data analysts, etc.) in the same way low technology took away the heavy lifting at the start of the industrial revolution. Economist and investment advisor Harry Dent, in his best-seller *The Roaring 2000s,* says that today's big winners will be those getting the most out of their right brains. Are you as ready as you need to be for this revolution?

> *The information age is now the imagination age.*

Over the centuries, selling ideas as a livelihood was the domain of only a very few. The currency of our great-grandparents and the generations that preceded them was sweat. The industrial revolution took away most of the heavy physical labor. Our parents' generation began more and more to make their livings with their minds instead of their bodies. They *thought* for a living instead of doing the no-brainer work that put food on their parents' tables. It was a dramatic shift in how people earned a living—their professional worth measured in brain power.

Fast-forward to the twenty-first century: Knowledge alone is simply not the edge it used to be in business. The most valuable currency

Creative thinking has never been more valued.



The dramatic shift in how we have earned our livelihoods.
The Information Age is now the Imagination Age.

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in today's more mature wave of the information age is new ideas. With the present incredible rate of change and the corresponding need to keep pace, the only way to be a true leader is with "constant innovation," as Tom Peters often says. The premium for quick, original thinking has never been greater.

The Ugly Side of the Information Age

The mental gridlock we often experience today that blocks creativity is a result of the cumulative effects of a world that has never been more highly educated and of overdosing on data in the information age.

> *The human mind is capable of infinite imaginary thought, as proven daily by our children. But kids have an advantage over most adults: Their minds aren't filled with knowledge.*

When you know the answer, your mind stops working; when you don't know, your mind tries to fill in the blanks and make it up. The secret to succeeding in business today, to finding more, bigger, better ideas to drive corporate success, isn't simply having more of the same old ideas but in having new ideas. And the secret to having new ideas isn't simply to will it: "I will have a new idea." It is just not that easy.

The secret to getting your mind to embrace a totally fresh, totally precept-shattering idea is to let go of what you know. Because when you *know,* well . . . you *know.* End of story. But when you *don't* know, you wonder what the answer is. The best thinkers of all time have been great wonderers. The greatest strides in the corporate world have come not from *willing* a new idea, but from *wondering* about something better. When you wonder—when you truly let your imagination flow into a state of all possibilities—that is when wonderful things happen.

Wonder leads to wonderful things.

Welcome to [Your Name Goes Here] in Wonderland

Wonder is a simple, childlike state of mind, but is often difficult for many people to achieve.

The problem is that as we know more and more, we need to imagine less, and the center of wonder between our ears gets less and less of a workout. For many people, that part of the brain becomes virtually atrophied. Add to that the incredible fear that is gripping people in business today, the fear of doing or saying something wrong and being passed over or even let go, and there is very little incentive for even trying to think of new ideas.

It's a sad state of affairs. Because certainly the incentive for having new ideas is accomplishment, even greatness. Since the beginning of time the highest achievers have been willing to stick their necks out, along with their minds, to push toward forward-thinking ideas. The great irony is that, although the rate of change and the need for a constant flow of new ideas has never been greater, no generation before us has ever been so reluctant to change. Why? Because no previous generation has been so well educated, had their heads filled with so much knowledge, been so *attached to what they know,* and yet needed so badly *to let go of what they know.*

Although many of the scared working stiffs of our generation are trying to figure out the incentive for fresh thinking, they're being frowned on by management for their risk aversion and "stuckness" in old ways of thinking.

The Best Managers Want Fresh Thinking

Weekly, I hear top managers lamenting the quality of creative thinking they are getting from their people and the lack of inspired thinking they're seeing in the pool of potential employees.

Happily for people like yourself who are reading this book, you'll soon discover a way to let go of what you know whenever you want to—to ramp up your creative thinking ability, to make your mind a nimble, prolific creative idea generator—to give yourself a wealth of the new currency that is driving business today like never before: fresh ideas.

So sit back and enjoy the process of opening up your mind. Embrace your Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy with open arms and an even more open mind. When you've finished this book you'll have the insights and improved skills to be a better thinker than ever before. You'll be the master of a nimble, fertile mind—not just a mind filled

with knowledge, but with the ability and willingness to generate fresh, new ideas that will become tomorrow's knowledge.

Your mind is the most powerful tool you'll ever possess. Challenge it. Train it. Use it to propel your career and the fortunes of the companies you work for. Now is your opportunity. Seize it with vigor. And prosper.

Cheat Notes for Introduction

- *Radical technology shifts have resulted in fewer and fewer people working with their bodies and more and more people working with their minds.*

- *Today, knowledge is not as powerful as it used to be; the power today goes to those who can act on the knowledge quickly to get an edge with new ideas.*

- *Creative thinking is the only way to make anything better, but because of its potential pitfalls it's a place few people have the courage to go as far as they can go.*

- *Creative thinking is something high-accomplishing people at leading companies do constantly, because there is always opportunity for improvement.*

- *The ultimate secret to getting your mind to embrace a totally fresh, totally precept-shattering idea is to let go of what you know. In other words, perform a Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy.*

How This Book Works

This book is like the side of the brain you're trying to develop:

random,
chaotic, **unpredictable,**

o p e n t o a n y t h i n g .

(Or skip this chapter and prove my point.)

I'd like to explain how this book is organized, or unorganized, as the case may be. But first let's talk about why it's organized(?) the way it is.

I believe there is a fair amount of method to coming up with original ideas on demand. That *is* the heart and soul of this book, right?

But I'll also admit ideas *can* come and *do* come without any procedure or inducement. In fact, that is how the creative process works on a great many days. The good days. The easy days. And on those days we can thank the gods of creativity for their generosity. But in business, of course, we don't often have the luxury to wait for that divine inspiration.

Over the years, I've found that the best kind of thinking for generating original thought is quite irregular, haphazard, nonlinear, and often illogical.

To that end, those are the kinds of thought processes that the thinking tools I've developed will bring out.

The Process to the Chaos

There's some semblance of order to learning the tools covered in this book and the concepts behind the tools. It's an order that will help you grasp them and use them more readily. This book covers some foundational elements first, in Parts I and II primarily, before we get into the tools themselves in Part III. We save what I cleverly categorize as "Dimensionalizing Your New Creative Tools" for Part IV.

As valuable as this order of presentation has been for the more than 100,000 people I've trained over the years (fundamentals of creativity, followed by Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy tools, Ask a Better Question, etc.), I must admit that it's far from perfect. I mean, how can anything related to creativity ever be perfect?

Different People Process Information Differently

In my reading of business theory and professional development books over the years, I've often found myself skipping this section or that, jumping around from B to Z and A to L, rereading something I had covered earlier, and so on. I have done this in order to take in the information as I needed it at the various times I picked up the book, with all due respect to how the author intended it to be read.

I have often wondered whether others read (or should I say "process information") in this random, custom-tailored way. It isn't always a strict reading of a book—sometimes it's scanning or rescanning, being reminded by headlines, subheads, and illustrations, or going back to charts or diagrams for reference. It's also using the index as a site map, or skipping ahead to the information you need more urgently, or even reinventing the book in your own form sticking notes in pages, tearing out or copying pages, sticking related articles in the gutter, and so on.

Before writing this book, I did a little "granny survey" of a couple of dozen friends and acquaintances to see how they read professional development books. And guess what? I'm not alone in my reading(?) habits.

Third Things First

It's becoming increasingly apparent that people today don't necessarily take in information linearly, as many who present it have thought for so long. Whether in books, periodicals, theater, film, songs, TV, advertising, even spoken language, we have all been taught that to communicate clearly we need to state our case in a basic order. Our communications typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end. A case is often presented in brief, the details are given, an analysis or argument is presented based on the facts, and then a conclusion is reached. At least, that was what was practiced for centuries.

Now we're finding out that people don't need or necessarily want an order in the communications thrown at them. They want access to all of the elements, to be sure, but they want to navigate the data *their* way. In this hurry-up world we live and work in, where to-do lists are longer and longer and attention spans are shorter and shorter, people don't want the big five-course feast of information; they want to reach and grasp from the information buffet when and how they please. Witness channel surfing, web browsing, and radio button pushing as evidence of this information consumption behavior.

Consumers of information also want it in smaller, more easily digested portions, as indicated by the layout and portion size of the *Wall Street Journal* front page, *People* magazine articles, CNBC's news sampler, and innumerable other communications vehicles of our time.

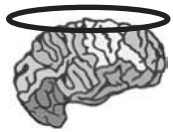
"I'll Read It My Way"

Exhibit A in this argument is how people find their way around an individual web site. If you have access to the "back room" of a web site, look at a detailed web report. Check out the section on "top paths through the site" or whatever they call it in your web report.

Here's what you'll learn: With the vast number of visitors to a web site, even the most frequently chosen routes are used by only a very small percentage of people. What does that tell you? That, given the choice, people say, "Thanks anyway to how you wanted me to navigate this information. I'll find my own way."

So, where am I going with this? Well, this book is not a web site, I'll grant you that. But it is not one of my seminars, either, where I have no choice but to bring everyone through the material in the same order and at the same pace.

Taking your thinking to a higher level.



The School Sisters of Notre Dame are dedicated to education and believe the idle mind is the devil's workshop. So they have vowed to keep their minds active. When not doing their educational work or worshiping, many of the good sisters play games, do puzzles, follow current events and such.

A number of years ago this group came to the attention of the medical science world, as they were outliving the general population and showing fewer signs of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. A study was begun to monitor their living habits, and upon their deaths many have been donating their brains to science. Some very interesting discoveries have been made. One such revelation is that many of the sisters do in fact have Alzheimer's. But because of their diverse and dynamic mental activity, it is believed, they have greater healthy resources in other areas of the brain to often take over for some of the performance when the weakened portions lose functionality with age.

Although what researchers call "the Nun Study" represents the largest brain donor population in history, this phenomenon is not unique to this group. But the community's closed population and unique commitment to education makes for interesting study. As of this writing, 678 Sisters are participating.

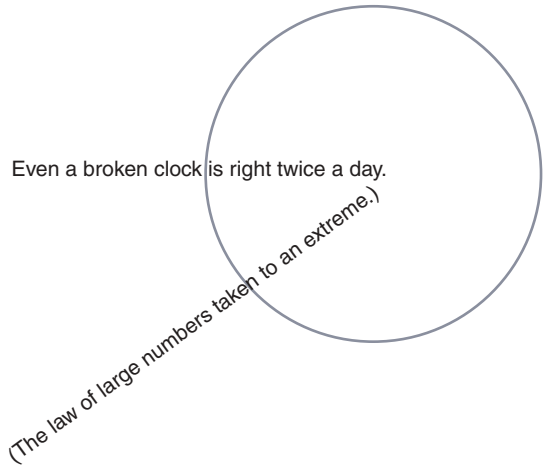
Many close to this phenomenon agree that an active mind throughout one's life puts the individual in a better position to "manage" the onset of mental aging, so that, when certain neurological pathways begin to dry up (neurons, dendrites, synapses, etc.), other healthier pathways can often assume their work.

The conclusion for the context of this book is that diverse mental activity is not just a way to come up with ideas and solve the problem du jour. It is also a good strategy to ensure that your brain maintains peak performance in general.

If you'd like to learn more on this fascinating topic, enter "Nun Study" into a search engine and find a comfortable chair.

A Book You Don't Have to "Read"

I have built a number of self-navigation elements into this book (as though you weren't going to do just as you pleased anyway). It started with the Creative IQ test you probably just took. After taking this quick little quiz, the order of the chapters in this book has already changed—from a priority perspective, at least. (You already may have read half of this book. See what I mean?)



Wooo: This book will have lots of random, out-of-place material, kind of like this. See more on the law of large numbers in Chapter 7, page 91.

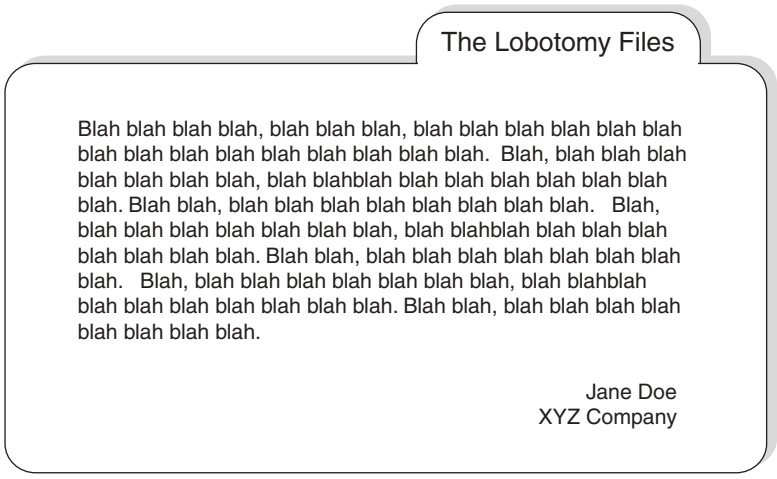
Following are some of the features that will allow you, even encourage you, to break the rules of thinking even as you (1) read, (2) peruse, (3) scan this book taking in call outs, sidebars and illustrations.

Henceforth you'll find the running text frequently interrupted by what I officially call "Wooo" (Wisdom out of order) elements, where information is presented more randomly, often more graphically, easy to read, sometimes totally out of the blue. These Wooo elements provide some balance to the running text by addressing the other side of your brain—the less structured, more free-flowing part that this book is helping you master.

Although it is my objective (and my private, perverted pleasure) to surprise you quite often with these free-style elements, there is sometimes some structure to help you take advantage of the lack of structure. Here are some of the elements to watch for.

Wooo!

These "Wisdom out of order" elements themselves consist of little blurbs, quotes, mini–case histories, and illustrations that may or may not have anything to do with the section where they're found. Some of these Wooo elements direct you to specific pages where the topic is covered in more detail.



This is what a Lobotomy File looks like, only the text is a bit more meaningful.

A Wooo may actually have something to do with the section you're reading at that point in time but relate more closely to another section. Then again, it may have almost nothing to do with the matter at hand or even contradict it. Fine. It's there to make you think and give you a quick path to where this tidbit is covered in greater detail.

Cheat Notes

Another element I've incorporated to help you process the information more organically is what I call "cheat notes." At the end of each section is a quick distillation of most of the major points made in that section. These cheat notes have a few purposes:

1. When read immediately after you finish each chapter, they help you recap what you've just read.
2. If you choose to skim some or all of the book in advance of reading, you can use them to take a quick peek into the content of each chapter.
3. Cheat notes are also an excellent way to review the book at a later time, long after you've read it, using the triggers to help you navigate to sections you may wish to read again.

The Lobotomy Files

Sprinkled throughout the book are statements from real people who have undergone our Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy (mini–case histories, if

you will). Many have experienced this psychic operation some time ago and have been reaping the benefits for years. Some of these people have chosen to remain anonymous, but I can assure you the statements are theirs.

Gaining the fullest results from your Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy (DIYL) will require a commitment on your part to change the way you think. This takes effort and discipline. And, similar to testimonials in diet or fitness books laden with real-world transformations, actual statements from happy DIYL victims give you encouragement in your changeover to a more original, prolific idea generator.

In the spirit of Wooo, many of these Lobotomy files are totally random and may have little to do with the chapter in which they appear, but they might steer you toward related reading elsewhere.

The Rewards of a Great Idea

When you have a great idea you have something that has tremendous potential. Like an asteroid crashing into the ocean, it can cause monumental initial impact and can effect a tidal wave of repercussions for amazing distances for a very long time.

Someone had the idea of the wheel. That tidal wave is still cresting and causing impact today.

Of course, not all ideas are quite so magnificent or recognized as world-changing events. Take that simple little fastener device called the button. Who had that idea? I don't know, but that concept has surely had a great, long-lasting impact on almost everyone on this planet. I bet that if I counted the wheels and buttons in my life I would find that the button plays as important a role (keeping my pants up) as the wheel (getting me to the airport).

When you come up with a new idea, big or small, think about its potential long-term effect. In the thinking/doing equation covered in Chapter 18, "Mind Farming™," I talk about how most of what we do in the course of a day (in meetings, on the phone, at the computer, traveling, etc.) is in the service of executing an idea.

How good is that idea? Will it have a positive, lasting impact? Will it blast through the atmosphere and fizzle before splashdown? Will it change things affirmatively and irrevocably?

A great idea can make a company—Xerox, 3M, Volkswagen. It can make an industry—computers, automobiles, aerospace. It can

The birth of an idea:

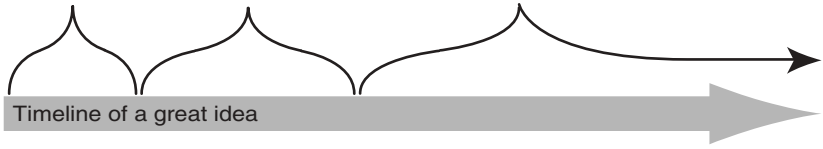
In the grand scheme of things, that magical flash of brilliance doesn't take long. What? A second? Maybe two?

The time it takes to execute an idea:

Again, in the grand scheme of things, it doesn't take a great deal of time to execute an idea, either. At least not that long compared to the ongoing life of an idea.

The ongoing life of a great idea (definitely indefinite):

This is a whole different story. There's the original idea in its fundamental form. Then there's the various permutations of the original idea during its early phases, often just minor modifications of the core idea. And then there are the subsequent generations of the idea that might look and feel quite different from the granddaddy, but would not be in existence without it.



make a career—Steve Jobs, Herb Kelleher, Sam Walton. Of course, some careers spawn companies and industries. (Or is it the other way around?)

Wow! All because of an idea? A computer that's easy to use. An airline that's inexpensive. A store that sells virtually the same things everyone else sells, but is defined by customer service.

Of course, not all great ideas live forever. Actually, a good many of them enjoy an even greater afterlife when they finally do die. An afterlife in the form of subsequent generations of ideas that would not have been born if not for the "genetic coding" of the original idea. For example, an idea like rockabilly is totally overshadowed by its offspring, rock 'n' roll.

There's also the afterlife where an idea lives on not because it is still viable, but because it is recognized as having made a big impact in its time—an idea like the great pyramids of Egypt. Although in some cases the idea is long since deceased, its spirit may live on and inspire others to come up with equally grand ideas totally unrelated to this now dead but revered concept.

Even the lasting ideas are not all huge, industry-breeding, direction-changing concepts. One idea that comes to mind from a project I was involved with early on in my marketing career is the universal orthotic insert we see in so many shoes these days. This idea emerged from the mind of a very creative podiatrist, Dr. Rob Roy McGregor, who designed the first running shoe developed under the Etonic brand during the 1970s running boom. Initially called the "single-unit heel and arch support," this device adapted the concept of the orthotic, an individually prescribed rigid device worn in shoes to correct pronation and foster proper heel plant, and turned it into a universal performance mechanism that is in virtually all quality athletic footwear today, as well as in many nonathletic shoes. A big idea that changed things, possibly forever, if only in a narrow, underappreciated area, Dr. McGregor's concept proved to be immortal.

Even if immortality is not your goal, you must be mindful that an idea has a life and an afterlife. A great idea can continue to deliver value for years beyond its initial inception. Whether or not you personally reap all of the rewards of this idea, you must know that you have created a living thing that will have an impact, help others, maybe generate income and livelihoods for generations to come. That is a great reward. And a great responsibility. Which leads us to the other side of this coin, which isn't always as bright and shiny.

Timeline of a great idea (continued)

Energizer™ Bunny used with permission and acknowledgment that this is a great, enduring advertising idea.

The Consequences of a Bad Idea

It has often been said that a bad idea is like a virus. It lives. It grows. It sustains. It spreads.

When you execute a bad idea it can be like taking the lid off that potent alien virus vial; once it's out, there's little hope for those who come in contact with it.

> *Bad ideas can spread even faster than good ideas. Their ramifications to the people involved can spread even faster in the ultracompetitive corporate world, where the grapevine often makes the news services look like the pony express.*

Does the saying, "Distance yourself from the stench," sound familiar? No longer is the problem the thing that smells; it's the stink left behind that is the problem.

As for all those philosophers who say, "There's no such thing as a bad idea," I invite them to see how long they can stick around without holding their noses when some of these whoppers hit the fan.

Elsewhere in this book I talk about the fact that a bad idea—even one that's as bad as bad can be—cannot hurt anyone, that is, until it is executed. Well, in this section we're talking about executing bad ideas, not just thinking of them.

A bad idea can derail the best-laid plans of any group. It can put a good company out of business. It can take away people's jobs, cause empires to fall, and cost a lot of people a ton of money.

The birth of an idea:

In the grand scheme of things, that magical flash of brilliance (?) doesn't take long. What? A second? Maybe two?

The time it takes to execute an idea:

Again, in the general scheme of things, it doesn't take a lot of time to execute an idea, good or bad.

At least not that long compared to the ongoing life of any kind of idea.

The ongoing life of a "bad" idea (can you possibly get your mind around the concept of eternity?):

This is a whole different story. There's the idea itself in whatever form. Then there's the baggage that goes along with the bad idea. The questions. The second-guessing. The echoes of ghosts past. With truly bad ideas the public can have a very long and vivid memory. And your boss's memory can be even longer and stronger.

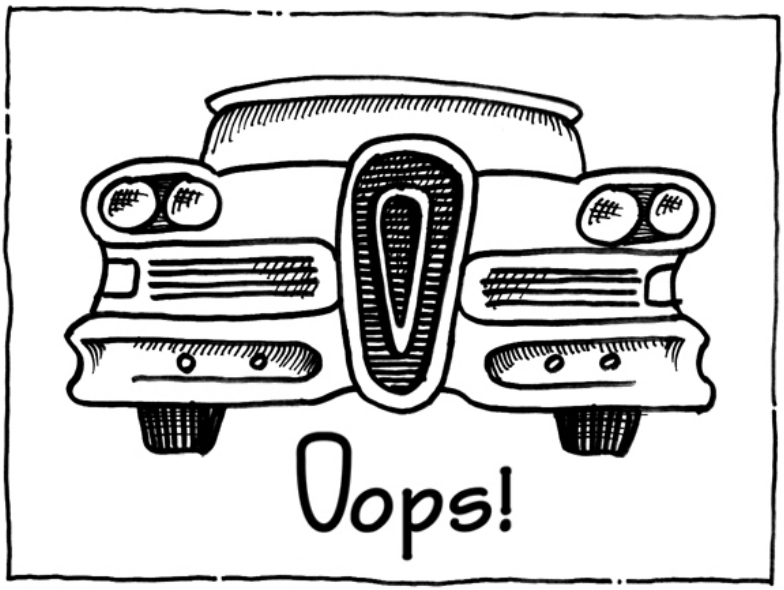
Of course, a good idea, poorly executed, can also do a lot of damage. And a bad idea that's well executed can . . . no, I don't think so. Basically, if we can have both good ideas and good execution, why would we ever settle for bad ideas or bad execution?

The good thing about bad ideas is that they so often put themselves out of their own misery. Die, bad idea. Die.

So, no harm done, right?

Wrong.

Exhibit A: the Edsel.



Yes, the product died (and perhaps not soon enough). But the idea of the Edsel lives on. That's the whole point here.

Because even if the idea dies or you're smart enough to kill it yourself, the aftermath of "Whose idea was it, anyway?" can linger on indefinitely.

> *Similarly to the timeline of a great idea, a bad idea, while taking relatively little time to conceive and execute, can have ramifications for years and years and years.*

Consider an "ouch" followed by an "ouch" and so on and so on to the *n*th degree.

Timeline of a lousy idea (continued)

Can you possibly comprehend
the concept of eternity?

The First Real Chapter (Finally!)

Yes, you are creative!

Have you ever had an idea? Sure you have.

Have you ever solved a problem? Absolutely. Probably a few today.

So you have the ability to come up with ideas and solve problems. Great. Now, answer this question: Do you get the idea that you're looking for every time? Do you get the solution to your problem every time? When you need it? With little effort or pain?

That's why you're reading this book. It's not that you don't have creative capability; everyone has infinite creative capacity. I mean, just remember when you were a kid . . . you lived in your imagination almost 100 percent of the time. It's not that you don't possess creativeness. It's that you have an inconsistency in accessing it, a discrepancy in coming up with big ideas when you need them. That's what this book will help you do. This book will help you become a more conscious, therefore more consistent, creative thinker.

A Planet of Unconscious Thinkers

What do you do on your best days, when you have a great idea? If you knew, wouldn't you do it all the time to improve your hit rate?

Is it something that you *don't* do on those days when you have a great idea? Are you at all aware of what you don't do on those good days?

Is it what you don't do on the bad days? Perhaps it's what you *do* on the bad days that's getting in the way.

If you're not particularly conscious of your creative thinking abilities, you're not a freak. Most people aren't very aware when it comes to thinking. Most people simply don't think about how they think.

We all have good days; we all have bad days. The good days feel so good. "Yes!" "A great idea!" "A solution to a problem!" There's nothing quite like it.

And then there are the bad days. "Oh no, it's not coming." "Oh, this isn't any good." Or worse yet, sometimes it feels like a great idea—"Yes!" And a few days later. . . . "What was I thinking?"

We're so inexact.

Why the inconsistency? Because, for the most part, we're unaware of what we do when we come up with great ideas, and we're unaware of what we do when we don't come up with great ideas or when we come up with less-than-great or even absolutely horrible ideas. We're simply unconscious thinkers.

Practice Doesn't Make Perfect

> *I have a golf pro, a guy who really likes challenges, who says, "Practice doesn't make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect."*

I don't know about you, but when I'm on the golf range—supposedly practicing—I'm usually just swinging away, totally unconscious of what I'm doing, getting really consistent at being inconsistent.

Did you learn the right way to think when you were about four months old? That's when we first started to formulate our own thoughts. Don't tell me you've been practicing imperfectly all these years! No wonder so many of your ideas wind up in the rough.

Well, guess what? You don't have as much to learn from scratch about creative thinking and problem solving as you might think. You see, this book isn't going to teach you as much as it's going to help you recognize what you do on your best days.

Recognizing, not learning. See? Already it's easier than you thought.

Have you ever practiced Intergalactic Thinking? Sure you have. You just don't know it.

How about 180° Thinking? Have you ever engaged in that type of thinking? Guess what? You've done that, too. Probably hundreds of times. You're just not aware.

Have you ever tried 100 MPH Thinking? Again, sure you have. You've been practicing all of these types of thinking processes for years. But, I hate to tell you, you've likely been practicing imperfectly because you have been practicing unconsciously.

Intergalactic Thinking, 180° Thinking, and 100 MPH Thinking are some of the thinking methods we cover in this book. I didn't make up these thinking techniques. They have been used by high-achieving people for centuries. And, yes, you've used them on your best days. I just made up the names—handles, if you will—to help people better grasp these valuable tools and to make them easier to use.

CODIFYING THE CREATIVE PROCESS

As a creative thinking coach, I work with people in industry in two principal ways. I help people improve their creative thinking abilities in a general sense through corporate training and skills development sessions. I also facilitate high-output brainstorming sessions geared to specific issues, challenges, and opportunities (new product ideas, promotional ideas, naming products, etc.).

One of my most active industry sectors is advertising, a field in which creativity is so codified that companies actually have a "creative brief," a "creative department," and *creative* is often used as a noun to describe the advertising itself, as in, "The creative looks great!" Frankly, I understand creative thinking much better than most people do. I understand creative thinking in a way that can help you become more conscious, consistent thinkers.

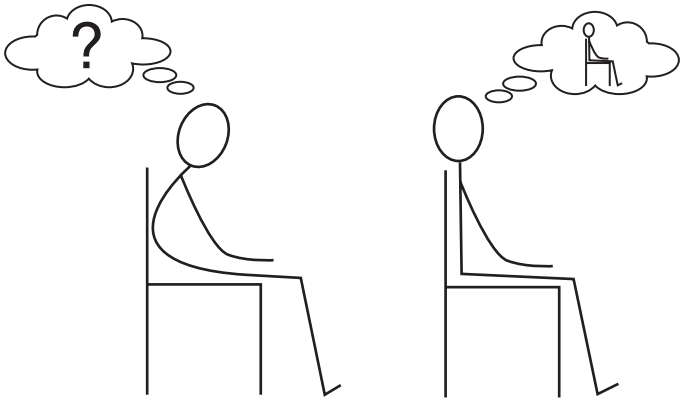
Now, being unconscious about creativity hasn't made you totally ineffective. Hardly. But you could be better if you were more conscious. Let me explain with an illustration in an entirely different area.

Sit Down for This

Let's talk about sitting. Are you a conscious sitter? Maybe you're sitting properly now. Maybe you have the right posture quite often. Maybe not. But do you know how to do it right? Are you a conscious sitter? I'm a conscious sitter.

A number of years ago I had a problem with my back. I went to see a chiropractor and he told me I was sitting wrong. I was having pain and he helped me make a few minor adjustments in my posture and the pain went away. I'm now a conscious sitter. And, for the most part, the pain is gone. Oh sure, on occasion I forget and I slip back into my old habits. But because I am now more conscious, I can remind myself and I can relieve the pain. I make minor adjustments and I don't have the pain.

This book is designed to make you a more conscious thinker so you can make minor adjustments to improve your game substantially. These little adjustments will improve your ability to come up with big ideas, improve your ability to solve problems, and do it all with great consistency.



Unconscious sitter. Conscious sitter.

A DO-IT-YOURSELF LOBOTOMY INCISION GOES HERE

What you know hurts you.

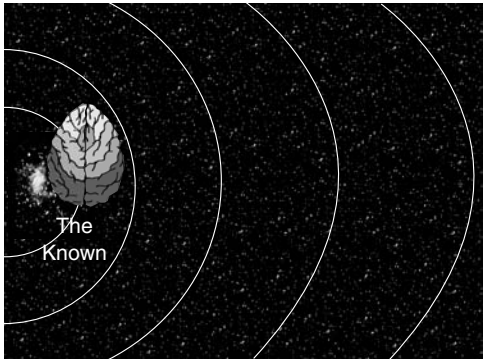
> *Virtually all of the thoughts that you process daily are conspiring to make you a boring, uninspired thinker.*

Scientists tell us that we have billions of thoughts running through our minds every day. On a conscious level, it's estimated that we process between 125 and 130 bits of data every second. That's over 11 million bits of data—just on the *conscious* level—each day.

Then there are the subconscious and superconscious levels. Literally billions of bits of data on or near the surface of our minds.

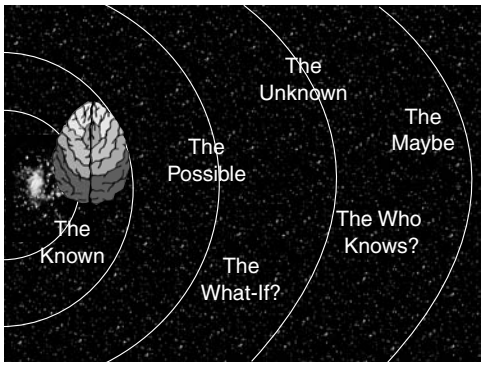
Think of your first-grade teacher. How long did it take to access that data? We each possess a veritable supercomputer between our ears.

HOW THE MIND WORKS (KIND OF)



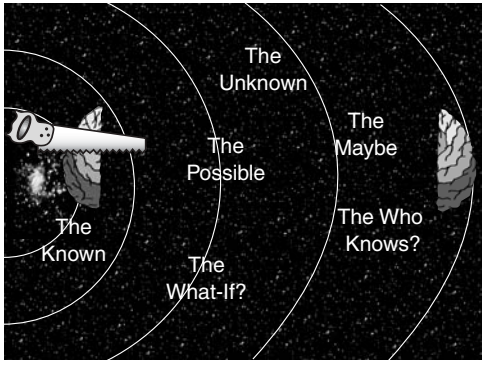
Each of these stars represents a bit of data. Each of us lives in our own galaxy of thought, where our mind resides almost all of the time because our thoughts default to the known. My own galaxy includes thoughts of family, my environment, my favorite sports teams, and so on.

Where New Ideas Are Found



New ideas don't reside in our known. Solutions to problems that are unsolved at the present are not part of our home galaxy of thought. Einstein said, "You cannot solve a problem using what got you there." Staying in the known, which is our natural state of mind, prevents us from exploring other possibilities.

How New Ideas Are Found



The Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy will help you let go of what you know, even if for just a nanosecond, to help your mind wander. Because when you know, you know—end of story. But when you don't know, you wonder—and your mind wanders—and that's when wonderful things happen.

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learned decades ago that if you *don't* want to sell it, everyone wants to buy it. We used to hide certain not-for-sale items behind a door in our house, only to find that more than one antiques dealer who called on us would discover it there and try to talk us out of it. After a while, when we really wanted to sell something we'd just "hide it" behind that magic door.

21 Tips for Selling Creative Ideas

All the tools covered in this book can play a role in helping you sell your ideas. Of course, there is a great deal more to selling than just the Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy tools in this book. And although I don't profess to be an expert on selling in the strict sense of the word, I do have some valuable tips to pass along that just might help you raise your *creative sell success rate.*

Are They Really Your Best Ideas?
The first tip for selling your best ideas is to make sure they *are* your best ideas. I see so many people wasting their energy—exerting their brilliant sales effort or even their lousy sales effort—trying to sell bad ideas. That's like building an elaborate restaurant business around a lousy chef.

So the first tip to help you sell better ideas is to actually *have* better ideas. Sounds pretty basic, doesn't it? Well, I can tell you that I've had a good many corporate clients, including ad agencies, ask me to help them with their sales hit rate when in reality the first thing they need to do is improve the product they're selling.

When It's Time to Sell, It's Too Late to Sell
Many years ago I facilitated an international forum of top managers in one of the major service industries. We covered a plethora of topics: attracting and motivating the best people, defining and articulating corporate vision, and so forth, all kinds of issues that top managers typically focus their energies on. We also covered selling, which of course is the lifeblood of any business. When the dust settled on three days of exploration, the major concept that kept resonating within this group was summed up in these few words, "When it's time to sell, it's too late to sell."

To a person, we all agreed that the biggest part of selling was the relationship the company had with its clients. If they had a great relationship

prior to the sale, even a shaky, less-than-perfect sales presentation usually resulted in a fair degree of success. But if the relationship was rocky . . . if the relationship was grounded in anything less than great trust and respect, the sale was invariably a bloody, unsuccessful venture.

With that brilliant deduction said, there are still some things you can do beyond relationship building to help others embrace your new ideas. Some of them follow.

The Tao of Selling

A major mistake many people make when trying to get others to embrace their ideas is doing just that—*trying* to get others to embrace their ideas, and trying too hard. This is one place where most people use 180° Thinking almost without thinking. And it's not always a good thing.

Here's how it usually works: Someone shows resistance to a new idea, and what does the parent of that idea usually do? What any proud parents do when their offspring is criticized. They resist.

> *The* Tao Te Ching, *that book of ancient Eastern wisdom, teaches that resistance meets resistance and surrender meets surrender.*

Yes, it's natural to push back. But if that's not usually going to help your cause, why are you doing it? Sure, sometimes we have to stand firm for our ideas, but if you make that your first defense, it may be your last.

A number of times when I was a creative director, I helped young advertising people get this point, often while they watched in open-mouthed disbelief. When clients expressed resistance to an idea, I would often say, "That's interesting. Would you explain that to me?" I didn't defend the idea. I didn't remain neutral. I just softened to their point of view and gave them some credence. At that point, clients knew I was listening to them, and guess what happened most often? They listened to me. Oh, I didn't sell the ad every time, but I had a very high batting average. And, importantly, I didn't make a mortal enemy of someone who had a great deal of influence on the outcome of my agency's ideas.

Have Clear, Written Objectives

When working on a project that requires creative thinking (are there any that don't?), before you even start the work, set clear objectives between yourself and those you need to sell the idea to, whether they

be people inside your company, outside your company, or both. And not only should you set clear objectives, you should write them down, because then it's not a matter of "I like it," "you like it," or "you don't like it," it's a matter of "does this satisfy the objective?"

Yes, there's still some room for interpretation there, but clearly defined objectives remove most of the wiggle room that so often causes misinterpretation and disagreement.

Believe me, this is very valuable, the writing-down part. If the objectives are in ink before work starts, then both parties can't suddenly have dramatically different recollections of earlier events.

Have Clear Roles. Written

Another thing to do is have clear roles in advance. It's pretty simple. Before you start the project, know who's going to play the role of coming up with the idea and who's going to play the role of reacting to it, providing guidance or buying the idea.

This may seem obvious if you're the ideator—it's my job to come up with the idea, it's your job to sell it—but if you have it clearly articulated in advance, in writing, then in the heat of a discussion that does not become an issue. If roles are not articulated clearly in advance and you present your idea to someone who starts tinkering, things can get kind of fuzzy and messy. You might say, "Hey, wait a minute, it's *my* job to come up with the idea. It's just your job to react to it, and if you don't like it then I'll go back and work on it." That's the wrong time to define roles, because then it appears that you're defending your *idea,* as opposed to defending your role in the creative process.

Many organizations have different roles for what may appear to be the same players. Even within the same industry and for identical titles this is true. I see different companies in a given industry where people with the same titles perform very different functions. So don't oversimplify this. Discuss it openly and write down the roles clearly. This isn't just a title thing, it's a who's-going-to-do-what thing, a professional-boundaries thing. And we all know that good fences make good neighbors.

The most abused title in the advertising business is that of creative director. The creative director should be the person who has ultimate say on things creative, but in many companies that person is not the creative director—it's the person the creative director answers to (the president, the owner, whomever). Whereas the creative director may have the title, the other individual has the authority. Even if I don't agree with the charade, at least roles do not become an issue when selling ideas.

Blowing Your Own Sale

Another tip on getting people to embrace your ideas is to avoid certain terms that can only lead to disaster:

"This is my favorite idea."
"I think this idea is great."
"This idea is just like . . ."

These and other such terms usually mean trouble. People you're selling ideas to really don't care what your favorite idea is; they want the *best* idea. They really don't care whether you think it's great. Oh, they may ask you, but in the end they want the best idea, the most effective idea, the idea that will produce the greatest results.

Similarly, "just like" doesn't do much in a unique marketing situation that needs a fresh solution. In fact, by definition, it can't be very creative if it's "just like" something. Even saying it's "somewhat like," which you can use for a support point perhaps later, is a bad idea to lead off with.

Yes, some people you're selling to may need the comfort of knowing that someone's been there before, but in many cases "just like" are code words for disaster.

Basically, the best way to sell an idea is not to talk about what's *your* favorite or what *you* like, but to talk about the objective and how your idea will help reach the objective. In this regard, advertising creative people are often their own worst enemies. A few years ago I wrote a piece in *Communication Arts* entitled, "You too can speak like a Harvard MBA." In this tongue-in-cheek article, I gave advertising creative people sound bites to use in front of clients to help them appear to have a clue about business: "This will move the needle" and other such arcane expressions. Creativity in business is not a beauty contest. This is commerce. What you like means nothing if it doesn't make the cash register ring.

Don't Have All the Answers

Here's a tip on selling that I learned early in my career. When I was about to start my ad agency over 20 years ago, I read an article about what the best clients look for in ad agencies. In this very helpful article, one individual said something to this effect:

> *"I don't want someone who* has *all the answers; I want someone who* will get *all the answers."*

If you have all the answers, which is the tendency when you sell (you try to have all your ducks in a row, you try to answer all the concerns), you could be hurting your cause more than helping. Even if you literally have all the answers, and even if your answers are correct, people don't always value them when they're just thrown around so readily.

Nobody's that smart. Nobody has all the answers. If you're stumped, or even just unsure and don't have the answer, don't guess. Don't B.S. people. Say instead, "I don't know. I'll get back to you on that." I can tell you from experience that many people find this honesty very refreshing.

Frankly, I use this technique sometimes even when I *do* have the answers. Why? Because if I have a ready answer and they have a ready objection, they're probably still stuck in their objection place. If I say, "Let me get back to you on that," they may cool off on their objection. If I come back with the answer when they're in a cooler place, maybe I'll have more success.

Another thing about this approach: Not only will they believe you're more thoughtful about it, but, frankly, *you may actually develop a better answer* in that extra time you allot yourself.

And one last selling secret in this area: You can charge people more if you take more time. (Only kidding. . . . Well, half kidding.)

Prepare for Success

Perhaps the greatest college basketball coach of all time, John Wooden, who led the UCLA dynasty during the 1960s and 1970s, said, "Failure to prepare is to prepare to fail." I see so many people go off half-cocked, ready to sell their ideas without the necessary preparation. Being prepared means thinking through how you're going to sell your idea, thinking through how others are going to perceive it, thinking about objections that might arise—again, not necessarily to have all the answers but simply to be prepared. It's utterly amazing how few people really prepare to sell their ideas. Then they wonder why their success rate is so low.

Another part of preparation is rehearsing. The best salespeople rehearse. Most people I encounter in business rehearse their sales pitch very little. The best salespeople rehearse a great deal. Ever wonder how they got to be the best?

Know Your Audience

Whom are you selling your idea to? Whom are you talking to? Your presentation, your preparation, might be very different if you're selling to *this* person versus *that* person.

Know the individuals, know their priorities, know what turns them on, and know what scares them. In the advertising business, I worked with a good many very smart people. Most were middle managers, and most had a certain level of fear of their top management. You need to recognize that. I have heard people in the ad business say, "If the idea doesn't make their palms sweat then it isn't a good idea." I say, if it makes their palms sweat, they're less likely to be allies in helping you sell this idea, and they're more likely to be obstacles.

I'm not saying you can't present an idea that might make them a little nervous. I'm just saying that you need to know them, know what makes their palms sweat, do your homework, and do your best to avoid the terms and context that might lead to sweaty palms. Sometimes it means answering the objections before you show them the idea. That doesn't mean saying, "Here's an objection you might have, and here's how I'm going to answer it." It simply means providing the information, the context, and the examples before you show them the idea. That can be quite easily done.

Know What and Who Is Behind Your Audience

If you know your audience, you'll know the important issues and the sensitive places and how to deal with them. If you don't know your audience, you won't know these things and how to deal with them. You are, essentially, operating in a minefield.

I like to know my audience's audience extremely well. Again, if middle managers are fearful of upper management, then I want to know the upper management, too. If I can't get to know upper management personally, I want to know them through speeches, through articles they've written, through the annual report. In fact one of the best selling tools I've used (it may sound like manipulation, but I mean it absolutely sincerely) is the phrase, "In your annual report your chairman says . . ." Of course, the annual report! This is the direction the company is headed. I'm helping the individuals I'm working with to align themselves with the direction of the company. Wow! When I point out that my idea is based on what their chairman says, it comforts them, takes some of the risk out of a new idea, and in many cases helps them to like it before they've even seen it.

"Two Rabbis Walk into a Massage Parlor . . ."

Have fun when you sell. You know, there's a good reason that old-time salesmen used to walk in and open with a joke, like a regular Shecky

Loman. People love a good yuk. Sometimes what you're selling has serious consequences. So lighten it up. Have some fun.

I'm not necessarily saying walk in with your rabbi joke, but I prefer a light atmosphere come show time. Sometimes that's really hard to do because so much is at stake. But sometimes the more that's at stake, the more nervous energy there is, and then they'll laugh at anything. Have some fun. Talk about something light. Talk about positive things before you get into the heavy stuff. It's like the dancing that Muhammad Ali does before he delivers the knockout punch. I don't want to put this in the context of combat, but it's just a matter of keeping it light before you get into the heavy stuff.

Up Your Curtain

Another method that helps to sell ideas is theater. I like to use the presentation as an opportunity to get people excited, to entertain them. People love to be entertained. People will pay $80 for a theater ticket, $8 to see a movie, $75 for a concert seat, $60 for a ball game. You can give them entertainment for free when you're selling, and it just might grease the skids to help your idea see the light of day. I'm not talking about song and dance in the cheap carnival sense—although sometimes it could border on that if that works.

I got a big lesson in using theater to sell when many years ago the ad agency I was working for lost a new business pitch to a guy who ran a very small creative shop. To neutralize the size advantage and make a couple of other points as well, this daring small agency owner carried a half-dozen mannequins into the prospect's conference room to help make his pitch. Word was the client felt the empty suits made about as much of a contribution to the meeting as the other agency's phalanx of executives, and at a much lower hourly rate.

Salesmanship Long on Theatrics

Theater can take lots of forms. One of my favorite theater tricks is something I performed years ago. This particular act was more pantomime than song and dance. We said nothing. In fact, a passive, static prop provided all the theater. This particular selling idea came directly out of the advertising idea that we were trying to sell, which came directly out of this product's primary point of difference. My ad

agency worked for Lotus Development Corporation, and we were presenting an idea for what they called a "document processor."

Lotus was late to get into word processing, so the company tried to leapfrog word processing with a concept for a "document processor," designed for lengthy, complex technical documents. At that time, the top-selling word processors, Microsoft Word and WordPerfect, were built primarily for business letters. With our niche being long documents, we had an idea for a print ad that was long. In fact, it was a double-gate, 16-page advertisement to run in *Time* magazine, nearly 70 inches long. To my knowledge it was the longest ad ever in *Time,* the longest from the standpoint of length when it was folded out, and probably the most expensive single, one-time insertion at the time in that magazine—about a million dollars, I believe.

To sell the concept of long document processing, and to sell the concept of a long ad, we created a tangible selling device. Our *theater* was a runner on the floor that looked like a massive, oversized long document. When people got out of the elevator, our runner led them 100 yards to the conference room down the hall. They were forced to actually walk on this very long document. What we did was to take five pages, have them blown up and silk-screened onto some 15-foot-long canvas pieces, and then we repeated it and stitched it all together. It was a production nightmare, but it was theater. It was event marketing designed to sell an idea. And I must tell you that the clients walked into the room already liking an ad they hadn't even seen yet.

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Can I Show You Our Suit, Sir?

Give people choice. When you're selling an idea, give people some selection. Don't just show them one idea. Nobody ever walked into a haberdashery that had only one suit. Nobody ever walked into an automobile showroom that had only one car. Nobody ever walked into a computer showroom that had only one computer. People want choice. Give it to them.

When I first started in the ad business, a senior writer told me that if you show people one idea, one of two things will happen. If they like you, they'll say they like it. If they don't like you, they'll say they don't like it. But if you show them three ideas and ask them which is best, they'll probably tell you the truth, and if they don't like you and tell you they like A, you'll know it's B or C that's best.

Of course, to give people choice forces you to have more than one idea. And, I'm not saying have one good idea and five bad ones; they all

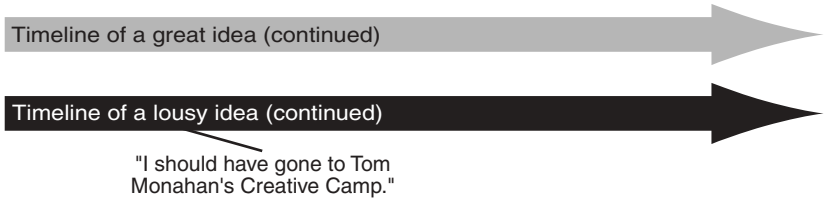
have to be good. But, heck, if you're using 100 MPH Thinking, you've got more ideas than you know what to present anyway. Offer them a choice. Many people are afraid of taking that leap. Because a lot of people don't believe they can have lots of good ideas. Well, I believe you can, and I've been around enough high-quality creative people who believe they can—and do. Besides that, an interesting thing happens when you present choice. A 180° experience, so to speak.

You see, most people in trying to sell an idea are really just trying to get someone else to buy the single idea they want them to take. Well, going back to the Tao of selling (i.e., force meets force and surrender meets surrender), when you try to force people, they forcibly say no, quite typically. When you offer them a choice, quite frequently after absorbing the many choices, the sellee will ask, "Well, what do you recommend?" And then you can make your recommendation. Easy.

You may go in with a favorite, but I will tell you that if you have an open mind, and this has happened to me on many occasions, after judging the reaction of your audience to your numerous ideas, your favorite might change. If you go in with a hard-and-fast recommendation, then change your stance when you hear a reaction, you could look like a fool or you could look like you're open-minded, depending on how you play it. But when you offer a choice, quite often people will ask what you recommend. And as a professional, isn't that what you want?

The great irony is that if you recommend only one idea, they look for a choice. I work with ad agencies that say, "We present only one concept per ad." And I'll ask how often they present only one. "Well, we present one five times in a row until we get it right." Well, then you're not presenting just one. You're having a very, very lengthy choice session (and very expensive, I might add). And how often do they come back and take choice number 2 after seeing numbers 3 and 4? It does happen, and it's a waste of time, effort, and money.

I like offering choice early on in the creative process. I don't like offering a choice of finished ideas. That's a lot of wasted effort. I like offering people a choice of ideas that are in earlier stages of development. But make sure they're all at similar stages of development,



because sometimes the ones further along in development have an unfair advantage.

Conviction Leads to Execution

If you want to take an idea from the conceptual stage to execution, nothing works like conviction. I'm not talking about force alone. I'm talking about a genuine belief that the idea you have is going to succeed in a very big way. When you use 100 MPH Thinking (often in concert with other of the Do-It-Yourself Lobotomy tools), you inevitably have many ideas from which to cull your shortlist. It makes presenting many ideas much easier, but more important than that, it gives you conviction.

There is a difference between feigned conviction, which I see all the time in business, and the real deal, or deal maker, as it were. When you present one idea, or even two or three ideas, to those who must buy in to bring them to fruition, they may react to your final recommendation by asking, "Is this the best idea?" It's a pretty fair bet that you'll have to say, "Yes this is the best idea," even though you can't look them straight in the eye when you say it, because you've looked at only a handful of ideas—you really don't know whether it's the best idea. There is absolutely no way you can answer with authentic conviction.

However, if you look at 100 potential solutions to their problem, present several, and make a final recommendation, then, when asked the same question, you can look them straight in the eye and answer, "Absolutely!" with firm conviction.

The fact of the matter is that you really don't *know* if the new idea is best. (I mentioned earlier that you never come up with your best idea.) And, with a new idea, there's never proof that it *will* work. (Of course, there's no guarantee an old idea will work, either.) But in the heat of an important sales pitch, it's important that *you* think it's your best idea, that you have unfailing and absolute conviction in your idea. And genuine conviction makes the sale almost every time.

Bring People in Early

A couple more things about selling: When you show people ideas that are undergoing development, they can take ownership. They can say, "Hey, I kind of like where that's going." Then, after you fully develop "their" idea, they are already onboard. I must tell you that people don't generally derail projects they have a vested interest in. Show them ideas early so they can be partners in the solution.

Again, in the advertising business I've seen many creatives who are petrified of showing others their ideas as they materialize, even internally. They often hold back from sharing ideas with the suits until

they're running out the door. Then all kinds of bad stuff can happen . . . the suits aren't prepared to sell . . . they don't know what's on your mind . . . they don't know what your recommendation is . . . they have seconds to make up their mind instead of being part of the process . . . and quite often they will decide what they're going to sell regardless of what *you* want them to present. Not good.

When you involve people early, you take a leap, but again, having crystal clear roles defines who creates and who reacts. Even if their reaction doesn't support your point of view, it's good to know this early. As an advertising creative person, I used the early in-house presentation as a gauge of what the client was going to think. I don't want to be ambushed by the client's objections at the moment of truth; I want to know in advance what the objections may or may not be. That's why I like having this interim, internal meeting.

"They Killed the Idea." (Oh, Really?)

This is an aspect of selling that a lot of people miss. We are most frequently selling ideas. How we dress them up is not the idea, it's the execution. If the way you dress up the idea determines whether the idea lives or dies, then it's not an idea you're selling; it's an execution of an idea, or a very shallow idea, at best. So, for instance, when I hear advertising creative people say, "They killed the headline, so they killed the ad," I answer, "No, they killed the headline. The idea of the ad may very well still be alive. Write another headline."

Often, there are lots of headlines that can articulate a concept. Likewise, in any field there are lots of ways to execute an idea. If there are *not* lots of headlines that can articulate your concept, then it's likely a very shallow concept. That's what's wrong with pun headlines; that's what's wrong with pun visuals. If they kill the pun, they've killed the idea, because it's often a very shallow idea.

I believe that for the most part people remember ideas, not execution. They remember the primary concept behind things, not so much the manifestation of the idea itself. When people tell you about a movie, they very rarely recount the dialogue or the art direction or the stage direction. They relate the idea of the movie. People rarely come away with details, even though details play an important role in articulating the story, mood, or message. It's the same way with ads and many other products and services. They'll tell you the concept of the ad; there are lots of different words that can play off the concept. (There are exceptions. Budweiser's "Wassup?" is a good example because the execution and the idea were very tightly integrated. In most ads that is not the case.)

Lose the Battles to Win the War

> *I see people holding onto the little things that really don't matter in the end.*

In so doing they often wind up losing the war, as in not making the sale. I see advertising copywriters die on their swords for body copy. I like great ad text as well as the next person, but look at the readership scores. Nobody reads body copy. Okay, correction: Maybe 15 percent of people read a well-read ad, but only 2 percent of people read body copy on the average ad. Don't die on your sword. Don't draw your line in the sand over individual words or other execution details.

In other areas, when things get torn apart in the selling (or non-selling) process, ask yourself, "Is the basic concept going to stay intact?" Great, then let go of what didn't sell and go back and rework the details. I'm not saying you can't explain your details better and come back later and have some answers on details, but don't kill the whole idea because some of the details died.

When the Close Ruins the Deal

I so often hear about salespeople going in for the close, and I'm sorry, but I believe that is an old-fashioned concept that doesn't treat the sellee as an important player.

To me that's often manipulation and an unfair tactic, going in for the kill. I don't mind asking for the order under many conditions, but under just as many conditions I recommend *not* asking for the order, particularly relative to truly creative ideas. I recommend saying, "This is the new idea; now before you commit to a yea or a nay, why don't you think about it?" You can walk out of the room for 10 minutes; you can call back tomorrow. But you don't have to have the answer right now.

Putting people on the spot to answer definitively yes or no often forces them to state a conservative answer, the easy answer, which is often *no, maybe not,* or *I don't think so.* Because, particularly when you're showing new ideas, people are a little uncertain. We've talked about the fear of coming up with new ideas; well there's fear in *buying* new ideas, too. And often the early reaction is a fearful one. So don't put people on the spot. Don't force them to make a decision when they're in a fear place.

Expand the Acceptable Range, Even in Selling

In Chapter 16, "Redefining the Acceptable Range," I discuss how sometimes when ideating, the win is not necessarily in going with *the* new idea, but in merely expanding the "acceptable range." When you expand this range of acceptability, you can often act on previously unembraced ideas, ideas that were not acted on earlier because they were outside the comfort zone of some people. The same is true in selling.

Show many ideas, and show some ideas that you believe are outside of the acceptable range. Of course, you must make sure they're all on strategy, but if they're outside the acceptable range from a style standpoint or a tone standpoint, you're still playing fair. Don't put them so far over the edge that you lose credibility. However, a few permutations beyond the acceptable range is fine. This strategy often puts the other ideas, those that may otherwise have defined the risk fringe, somewhat within the acceptable range. Thus when you ask, "What do you think?" or when you give them time to reflect, they may now be willing to go with a new idea, even if it's not the far outer fringe.

Selling the Unknown

As I mentioned very early in this book, new ideas are part of the unknown—if they're truly original, that is. At this point in the book I shouldn't have to explain or defend the value of new ideas. This is not a book about the tried-and-true and the obvious. If you want lessons on selling the tried-and-true and the obvious, there are hundreds, probably thousands, of books that will help you. This book is about coming up with fresh ideas and using just as many creative resources to *sell* those new ideas.

The Secret to Selling Is Very Small

The secret to selling creative ideas is very small. It's what I call "the zone." It's that happy place where the seller and the sellee can peacefully coexist. Being creative is hard enough. Selling creative ideas can be even trickier if you're not equally resourceful in your approach. There are many frustrated creative people who have great ideas but can't get anyone to buy them. I might suggest

it's less a case of closed-minded buyers than perhaps a case of closed-minded sellers. They don't understand that if an idea isn't in that happy place or can't expand the buyer's acceptable range, then it just isn't a great idea.

I close this chapter with a story about a young lady who once freelanced for me at my ad agency. After busily working up a number of concepts to help solve a client's communications challenge, this bright-eyed, ponytailed young woman proudly brought some tissues into my office for some feedback. I put a handful of the better ideas aside, gave her some constructive feedback on them, and told her that they were very nice ideas. She beamed like a third-grader who'd just finished a test early. "But you realize," I said, "I can't present these to the client."

She knitted her brow instantly. I continued, "These ads are nice creatively, but they're not on strategy."

"You mean all those great creative ads that Leonard/Monahan wins awards for are also on strategy?" she said incredulously.

"Well, yeah," I said matter-of-factly.

She turned on her heel and went back to her office, I'm sure thinking about something quite similar to my earlier zone illustration.

Cheat Notes for Chapter 17: Selling Creative Ideas Requires Its Own Creativity

- *On average, the quality of the ideas executed is never as good as the quality of the ideas actually conceived.*
- *It's not a great idea if it doesn't ultimately see the light of day.*
- *The real winners are the people who have new ideas that actually become reality.*
- *If your ideas are compromised too deeply too often, maybe it's not the quality of the ideas or the execution; maybe it's a lack of ability to have others see the brilliance in the idea.*
- *Identify the people you need to sell the idea to. And don't guess what's on their minds. Ask them.*

CHAPTER 18

Mind Farming

How to Identify and Develop Creative Thinkers in Your Organization

This chapter has been written principally for people who manage others. If you're not a manager, you can learn a great deal about managing yourself for greater creative achievement. You may also learn more about what your manager might be looking for in you.

When running my ad agency years ago I found that there were many critical decisions that affected the quality and the success of our relationship with any given client and the creativity of the work we did for that client. Of all the decisions we made as managers that contributed to the success of an account team the most important by far was the choice of exactly who made up that team.

This talent selection process was particularly critical to me, as creative director, when assembling the copywriter and art director duo who would lead the creative development process on that account. Would they have the horses to do the job? Would they match up with the client's needs? Would they require a great deal of supervision or free me up for other fronts?

I often found myself thinking of people in terms of *drivers* and *others*. Who's going to drive the creative process for this client, and who is simply going to contribute her or his role to the team?

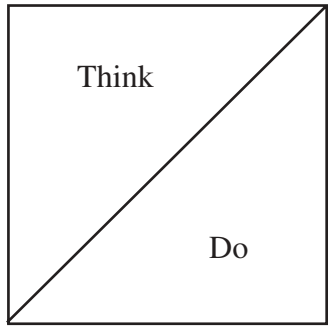
Now understand, this was long before I became a creative thinking expert. But it was during these years of moving people around on the great game board of ad agency account teams that I first got the sense

that not all people were the same kinds of creative animals. Therefore, to produce the greatest creative bounty, I needed to cultivate, or manage, these "idea creatures" differently from one to the next. I call this management process Mind Farming.

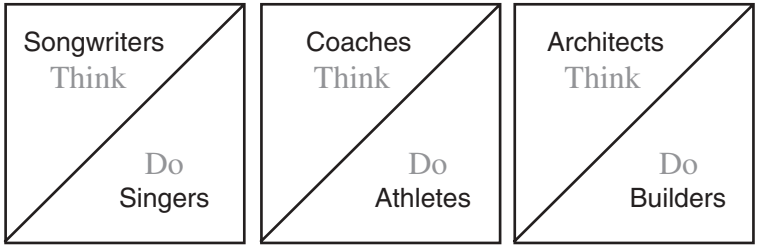
> *In the same way farmers have to manage pigs differently than cows and sheep differently than chickens, managers need to cultivate the various mind-sets of the different animals who work for them to reap the greatest results.*

The Basics of Mind Farming

Every person in your company has unlimited untapped creative thinking capabilities—more than they themselves might know exist. And the first step in developing these dormant capabilities is to identify where people stand currently in realizing their creative thinking potential.



Let's start by making a distinction between *thinking* and *doing,* using *mind* and *body,* as those modes of working relate to the primary functions of individuals and jobs. We all think and do virtually every waking moment, even when *doing* is only sitting at a computer or sleeping. Everyone in your organization falls principally into either the thinking mode or doing mode as they provide their greatest single value to the organization. Increasingly in business, companies employ more and more people for their thinking and fewer and fewer for their doing (see the Imagination Age grid on page 16).

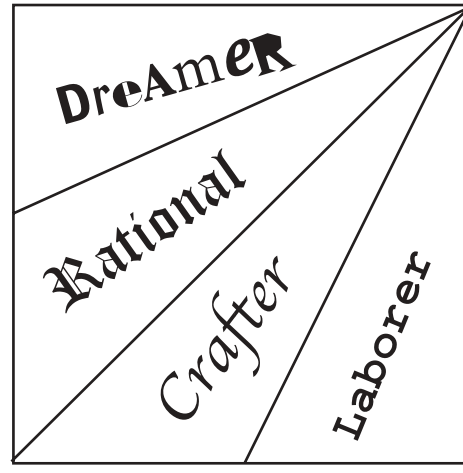


Surprisingly, thinking and doing are two concepts that are often confused when discussing creativity. Imagination, ingenuity, and innovation are, of course, all in the realm of thinking. The execution of the ideas that emerge from creative thinking is mostly in the doing realm—in which we use our eyes, hands, arms, backs, and legs.

As we discussed earlier, people often confuse these realms. "I'm not creative. I can't draw a straight line," we often hear. Or, here's another misconception: "Listen to her sing. Isn't she creative?" Not necessarily. Drawing and singing are in the doing realm, where very little creativity occurs. Songwriting, but not singing, is in the thinking realm. Drawing a straight line requires no creativity. It requires talent, maybe skill, but it's not an example of creativity because it's not thinking of something new. As we discussed in Chapter 4 our society has somehow twisted the term *creativity* to mean "artistic." Most art is the result of talent, "doing," unless it's based on an original idea, in which case it's an expression of creativity, an expression of the original idea that happened in the thinking realm. There are exceptions, such as abstract painting, where the artist "does" usually without preconceptions.

Now, all this discussion of the thinking realm forces another distinction: creative thinking versus rational thinking, or new ideas versus old ideas. As Einstein put it, imagination versus knowledge, what might be versus what is.

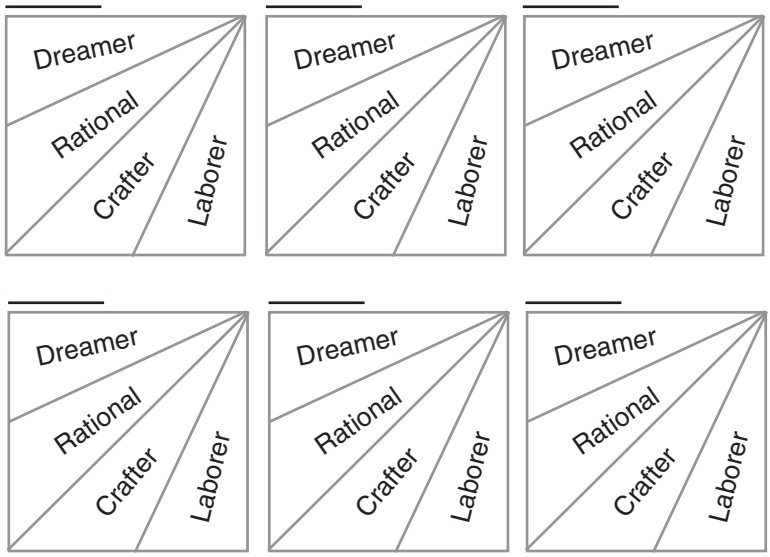
In the same way we need to be clear on the two modes of thinking, we need to distinguish between the two modes of doing: *crafting,* or doing with care, and *laboring,* or just knocking it out. Together, these four basic modes of function comprise the spectrum of creative thinking types within which all people function. They also denote the four basic animals that Mind Farmers must cultivate.



The four basic Mind Farming personality types.

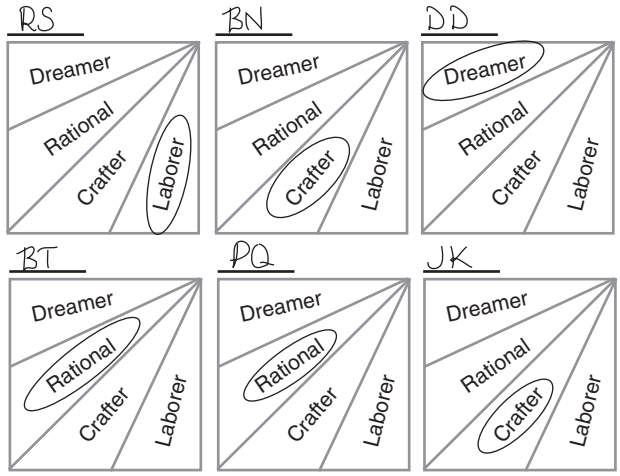
Let's examine these different animals and discuss the distinct dimensions that define them. For this up-close examination, we start at the bottom right of this creative typologies map, and working clockwise toward the top left, we iden-

Mind Farming Worksheet for individuals on your team



As we discuss the traits and attributes of these typologies, choose a team in your company and plot the individuals according to the Mind Farming personality types. Put the individual's initials on the blank above his or her Mind Farming map. Then circle the typology that best suits their primary contribution to the team as shown on the example below. (Please note that functional teams tend to be no more than six to eight people.)

Example:



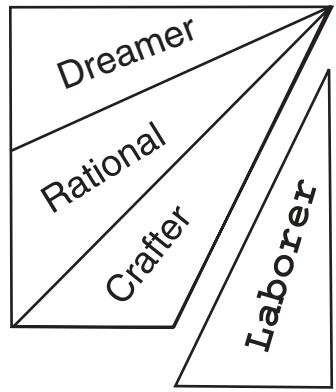
tify the *laborer,* the *crafter,* the *rational,* and the *dreamer.* The first two are principally in the doing mode, of course, and the latter two are in the thinking mode.

All individuals function in all four fields at different points in time, as they migrate around the map according to what they're doing or the challenges that face them. But all individuals also have a dominant thinking mode and a dominant doing mode, one of which is their superdominant mode, which normally defines that person's primary value to the organization.

Sometimes you can be in all four modes over a very short period of time. Let's take the example of painting your living room. When considering unusual paint colors, say periwinkle or puce, or trying to match color on the underside of a rubber plant leaf, you would be in the *dreamer mode.* When considering colors such as tan or gray, colors that are more common, you would be in the *rational mode.* When doing the fine work of painting—cutting edges or painting a window sash—you'd be in what I term the *crafter mode.* But when you're watching something on TV or doing something else that occupies your mind while at the same time painting the walls (barely concentrating on what you're doing), then in terms of Mind Farming you're in the *laborer mode.*

THE LABORER MODE

Those who operate entirely or mostly in the laborer mode are the foundation of the doing workforce. Since the beginning of time, most organizations have needed laborers, but this demand has been decreasing recently as machines and computers take over many of the



predominantly physical-labor-intensive jobs and repetitive, routine functions.

Typical Career Laborer Jobs

- Data entry
- Cab drivers
- Bank tellers
- Ditch diggers
- Toll takers

Temporary laborers:

- Juniors/trainees

Laborers are most often the less career-minded side of the doing workforce. These same doers who have upward mobility on their minds or who take jobs as a temporary means to an end are not permanent members of this typology (e.g., the student just out of school, the actor who waits on tables). Even the most creative minds—rocket scientists, for example—while mowing the lawn on their off-hours, enjoy periods in this no-brainer mode.

Career laborers, those who function principally in the laborer mode with little intention of moving higher in the creative thinking hierarchy, most often need to be told what to do, as well as how, when, and where to do it. And they routinely need someone else to supervise them, to tell them whether they've done their jobs properly and when they are finished. These hard-core laborers tend to do only what it takes to get the job done; they're often in no particular hurry, and, should a problem occur, it's usually their nature to wait for others to solve it. They may tend to leave at 5:00 sharp, whether or not the job has been completed.

The Crafter Mode

The crafters also operate mainly in the doing mode, but the principal distinction here is that they take greater *care* in their jobs and, for the