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About the Author

Annie Bushell's parents did all that they could to ensure that she had a happy childhood. However, she was encouraged to focus on her studies so that she could look forward to a comfortable, but not exciting, future.

Annie was told that she should confine her creative activities, which included painting and poetry, to her spare time.

Annie decided that this was probably the best course for her when she started work because the country like most others, was suffering from a period of relatively high unemployment.

She kept painting and then realized that the division, which her parents believe, existed between creative activities and the work that she was doing was an artificial one.

Annie found that the same processes which used to solve problems that arose with her artwork could be applied successfully to problems she encountered at work.

It also worked the other way, of course. She found a lot of support for this idea. Many of the biggest and most successful companies and private organizations worldwide were actively encouraging their executives and even, in some cases, all levels of their employees to think "outside the box" when looking for solutions to important problems or ways to improve productivity and reduce costs.

This acceptance of creative thinking is not universal. Many equally successful companies actively discourage it, believing that it interferes with these systems which they have in place.

Annie says, "Creativity is an important part of each person's real self. It should not be suppressed or confined to certain times."

But, she says that breaking the rules could cost you a lot more than you realize. Even if your ideas could improve the results, the people around you are probably not likely to give them a fair hearing and will be upset. Your

bosses may decide that you are a troublemaker or not focused on what is best for the company.

This is Annie's first ebook. She believes that readers can use the ideas and methods she explains here to improve all areas of their lives. The feedback she has received from friends and colleagues that she shared these ideas with has been truly encouraging and gratifying.

She says, "My book is based on our experiences and my research. Many people tested and proved ideas and methods which I used as the raw material for my own experiments."

"I hope that all my readers will find these ideas as valuable as I do my business and personal activities."

Dedication

I dedicate this, my first ebook, to my family of course.

I would also like to dedicate it to Mr. Marvin Pipkin.

Who?

Marvin Pipkin worked as a chemist with General Electric just over a century ago. He found a way to produce safer and more durable frosted globes.

The globes which everyone had at that time were frosted on the outside which made the bulb weaker, reduced the amount of light which got through and also caused dust to collect on the globe which further reduced the amount of illumination available.



Mr. Pipkin was not the first to try to produce a bulb with the frosting (etching) on the inside. I read that it was a common joke to tell newly employed junior chemists at that time to produce a globe with that property.

It was considered impossible, but Mr. Pipkin succeeded.

He had enough faith in his "impossible" idea to produce a practical version which was stronger than all those which were available. Another advantage was that the method produced a bulb which allowed more light to get through the bulb.

Do you have an idea which can produce similar benefits for the industry which you work in? You won't know if you don't give yourself permission to re-awaken your personal creativity and take action on the ideas you produce.

The light bulb is a great symbol of creative thinking. Its history involves many determined people that produced their own versions.

Thomas Edison bought patents from other inventors and did lots of experiments of his own before producing a bulb which satisfied his criteria for efficiency and safety.

About 1,800 of Mr. Edison’s prototypes did not work. I am sure that Mr. Pipkin also had his share of those as well.

But, like every other successful inventor, they had no time for those who called those experiments “failures”.

They were teaching them what didn’t work, not that the goal was unobtainable.

I don’t know if it was because of Mr. Pipkin that the cartoon image of a very bright light bulb has been generally accepted as symbolizing a great idea or burst of creativity, but his brighter and safer bulb would be one good reason.

Introduction

Everybody has a serving of creativity in their biological make-up.

This is probably most noticeable when we are young and less inhibited by pressure from parents and others to conform to the views and customs of those around us.

As we grow and seek to fit in, most people adapt to the views and instructions they are given.

Those who don't may get into trouble because of their non-compliance.

Years pass and most of us find our time taken up with getting an education, dates, a job and so on.

In most businesses, conformity is rewarded.

Some people think of “creative thinking” as an undisciplined approach compared to more widely accepted approaches.

I've known people that work that way but the results are almost always disappointing.

My approach to creative thinking follows the example of various people that have used their personal ideas to enhance, not replace, the way they do their work.

You will have to work at least as hard as anyone else when you start to add your own creative touches to your personal and business pursuits.

The best reason I have for you to make that effort, even if you are currently unsure that you have any innate creativity or the means to express it, is that I am sure you will not only produce valuable ideas to enhance your business and personal life, you can also look forward to building a lifestyle which better suits you and has more potential for lasting results.



Start Now, Adjust Later

People that procrastinate, like me, don't consider themselves lazy. They are too busy and believe that they need to be fully prepared before they get involved in a project.

That may be true, but we also tend to delay the start of many other things for longer than necessary.

Two approaches which you should consider are:

- 1) **Eat Your Vegetables First:** Actually, I'm suggesting that you start with the part of the task which you like the least.

I recommend this approach because you will probably have a high level of enthusiasm which may make it a bit easier to sustain your effort until you clear it off your plate.

Once you have dealt with your “spinach” successfully and found it was much better than you thought it would be, you can be confident that the rest will be much easier.

- 2) **Mop Up Around the Edges First:** Some people find that they get better results by starting by clearing up some of the smaller items. They say that this gives them a little buzz when they complete each one and that helps them to continue on and tackle the more involved parts of the project.

Don't spend much time making a decision about which you will try first. The main thing is to make a start. Until you invest some of your time and effort into a project, it's just a dream.

Even a small investment will make it more likely that you will complete it. When you have done that and seen some good results, you will be less likely to hold back before starting the next project.

“Start Now, Adjust Later” helps you to move forward with your project while you still have some of the original enthusiasm which produced the basic idea.

An idea which is stored away without any action being taken will start to lose value almost immediately. Even if you come back to it at a later time, you will probably find it much harder to put as much energy into that old idea because of other, newer ideas which you have come up with. You will also have to devote valuable time to refresh your memory about your idea and all the associated details.

There is also a very strong possibility that someone else will discover and push forward with the same idea or something very similar while your notes about it are stored away.

Even if your version of the product or process is better, they will have an advantage by being first to market.

If your idea is almost the same, the appearance of their product will mean that you will have to write off your idea.

But, there is a silver lining. I learned from a couple of people who had this sort of disappointment. They both said that it taught them a valuable lesson and they have always been more willing to start as soon as possible after they produce an idea and find some practical value in it.

I also believe that brainstorming sessions have a benefit to our general health apart from the value of the ideas which we can get from them.



When you get a great idea, FLY With it!

Mind Map – My Favorite Creativity Tool

There are many items which have been developed to help us improve how we use our inbuilt creativity.

The one which I have found most useful is the mind map.

This is a diagram which can be hand-drawn on a large sheet of paper and stuck to a wall or whiteboard.

There are also computer based mind map software programs.

The difference between a mind map and the usual diagram you scribble in a notebook is the way you lay it out, and its versatility.

In whatever kind of mind map you use, the first step is to put a shape in the center of the page and label it with the main subject which you want to develop your thoughts and/or plan of action about.

From there, you draw shapes around the central one and label them with the main sub-topics.

As you add each new shape, you draw lines connecting the new shape to the central one and also to those other shapes which have a direct relationship to the sub-topic which you just added to your diagram.

Each of the topics may also have sub-topics which are only connected to it.

You can indicate other relationships between certain topics by using a particular shape or color for each different group.

This makes it much easier to follow a discussion or even just your own thoughts about a particular aspect of the whole topic than if everything was just written in a list in your notebook or a file on your computer.

The computer programs which produce mind maps have many features which make them more versatile.

Even the most basic hand-drawn map is useful for quickly finding relationships between various areas of the project, the relative importance of

each and locating any area which may not be getting sufficient attention or resources.

Following the connections between the various nodes (shapes) is also a great help in finding anything which might cause problems with the completion of the project.

The best news is that all those which I’ve seen are fairly easy to use with a minimum time needed to learn their basic operations. There are programs available for both Windows and Macintosh computer systems.

They range in price from free to several hundred dollars. Even the most basic have enough features to be worth the time it would take you to try them.

I have included some details about the most popular programs in the resources chapter near the end of this book.

What Holds us Back?

This section examines some of the actual reasons which stop some people making full use of the creative ideas which they find or develop.



1] The biggest is possibly the fear of the consequences of change.

The results which they are getting from their current way of doing things may not be giving them the results which they want, but many of us will favor their current situation against risking what they have for greater rewards when there is a possibility of a negative result.

2] Many people attach their own sense of self-worth to every idea which they develop.

They hold back from putting their thoughts and strategies out for consideration because they feel that any negative response, however minor and carefully expressed, to their idea is a personal attack on them.

When you offer an idea, you need to understand that other people's response to you is about the suggestion and cannot be taken as a reflection of you personally.

3] You might feel be inhibited where you have suffered a negative response to a previous suggestion.

This should not stop you from making other suggestions.

You may be depriving your organization of valuable input. Avoiding criticism is likely to affect your chances of advancing your career when others are seen as more focused on the needs of the organization.

4] If you find that all your ideas are being viewed negatively by senior people in the organization, you should consider whether you should try to develop them independently.

Examining an idea in this way can have value even if you have no intention to take the idea elsewhere. It can give you a different perspective on its potential value.

5] Some ideas need more time than others for proper consideration and development before they are ready to be used. But, if you regularly put aside ideas after you invest time in considering and fine-tuning them, you are wasting a lot of your valuable time and probably reducing the value of your creative efforts. The best ideas are a product of the circumstances and needs you have when you think of them. If you don't act on them, the need which they could have addressed will be unfulfilled and you will probably never actually put them into practice.

6] Some organizations publicly support the idea of consultation in either informal or formal ways with all levels of their staff. But, if the employees find that nothing usually happens as a result of their input, the amount and the quality of their suggestions will reduce rapidly. This will also affect their view of the organization their position with it in a highly negative way.

7] Sometimes, a person or a company will think that an idea might cost more in time, money and other resources than the potential return, so they will decide it is not worthwhile to follow up.

But, you should always examine your ideas thoroughly. If you have spent time focusing on a particular area, you may know of extra ways to use and profit from it which are not immediately obvious.

Some small ideas that may seem minor at first glance can bring big returns when you look for extra benefits from using them to their full potential.

8] You may generate some great ideas which you don't have the time or other resources to use. Maybe you could offer this to other people as a gift or for a share of any profits which they get from implementing your idea.

8] Some ideas will require a lot of effort and perhaps resources as well to make full use of them. Look carefully at the potential return before deciding that it will be too hard to do.

Brainstorming by Yourself



This chapter will help you to evaluate and improve the value of your ideas in an organized way.

I found these steps saved me time because they help you see potential uses and also any problems which might be overlooked unless you use a system like this.

When you are brainstorming ideas, put everything on paper. Don't limit your ideas to those which have obvious value on first sight.

It will actually save you time and make each session more productive if you let your mind run free to a higher degree than you might in any formal discussion with other people.

Don't throw away any idea even though some may seem at first glance to have little or no value. Put everything on paper.

Don't stop during the session and dwell on some particularly appealing idea. Use its appearance during your brainstorming session as encouragement to keep going and more, sometimes better ideas are the likely result.

If you stop to evaluate each idea, you lose the free-thinking mode which is often the source of the best and most original concepts.

Don't just look for new ideas. Many of the most valuable ideas have just been developments or even minor tweaks to products and procedures which have been long established but may not be as effective as they used to be.

This sort of effort is probably going to be more tiring than you expect, especially the first few times that you try it.

Set a specific time to stop your session. Then, gather your sheets of notes and do a minor review. Don't try to judge the quality or value of any of the ideas at this stage – you're still too close to the material to do that effectively.

This kind of mental activity is tiring and it takes practice to overcome the initial barriers.

Try to keep going for a little more time than may feel comfortable. You are training yourself for a new and valuable skill – generating ideas.

You need to be like an athlete who pushes him or herself beyond the feeling of discomfort until they get their second wind.

From experience, I can tell you that is where you will find many of your best ideas!

If you are not tired at the end of the session, you have not got anywhere near the finishing line or you're not doing it right. Don't let the results of the first session be the criteria for whether you do another one.

You are learning something new and you will need to have at least, say, three sessions before you can really judge how much value you are getting from this sort of mental exercise.

When you have a few pages, not just a few lines, of ideas of various kinds, look for the major ones and choose the idea which seems to have the most benefit for you in your current situation.

Examine it carefully for potential value and also any obvious major flaws.

The second step is to put it aside after your examination and let your subconscious mind work on it for a while.

The hardest step is to let an idea mature without interference for at least a couple of days while you attend to your current priorities or even go to a sporting event or some other sort of entertainment.

Even if you have any spare time, please avoid fiddling with the problem. Seek mental and possibly physical stimulation which is not directly related to the topic that you have entrusted to your subconscious.

You will know when the idea has matured. In my experience, it will appear in your head without prompting while you are engaged in some other activity.

That's why it's important to carry a small notebook or digital recorder with you at all times.

As with any portable device, either check your batteries every day or carry a notebook and two reliable pens!

That should give you a start with your first session or two.

Over time, you will find some tips will be of greater or lesser value to you in your particular circumstances.

Adjust your methods, but I recommend that you don't drop any of the steps completely.

Some people think that they will save time and energy by leaving out the stage where I suggest that you avoid consciously thinking about or researching any further on the idea.

But, while you are focusing on other matters or even getting some well-earned and necessary relaxation, your subconscious mind is processing the material you had absorbed and its ramifications.

Getting Feedback

The next step is to lay out your idea with more detail. You don't need to dot every 'i' or cross every 't' at this point.

You just need to put on paper enough information that the friends and colleagues you show it to have enough background about it to evaluate it.

There are two important things to remember when you do ask people to give feedback about your "baby".

1] Don't take their comments personally. In those times when you have been asked to give feedback and you'll probably remember the shock you felt if the person that asked you reacted strongly if you were less than suggesting about their idea?

The truth is that people don't like criticism, even when they say they want it. That is especially true when it involves something which they have been putting a lot of mental or physical effort into.

Remember that their comments are almost certainly focused on helping you to either improve the acceptability and success of your idea or encourage you to produce better ideas in the future.

Look at it from that point of view and thank them generously, even if you don't agree with what they said. You don't have to accept their point of view - you are thanking them for giving you the benefit of their knowledge and experience.

How You can Produce More Successful Ideas

If you are like many people I know, and you consider yourself to be a good worker but not very creative, I have news for you.

You almost certainly have enough creativity to produce ideas with comparable value to almost anyone else. You have probably been denied opportunities to do so or had your efforts downplayed because you are not considered creative or maybe you are in a job where creativity is seen as a waste of resources.

Here are some suggestions which have been helpful to me and other people I know when we try to produce more and better creative ideas.

Write it down or record it: I hate to think how many useful and valuable ideas are lost every day because they are not written down or recorded in some other way. Ideas come at the most inconvenient times and places!

Take Action: Recording your ideas is no use if you just put the records (written or recorded) away for your grandchildren or some mice to find years later. Set aside a time each week to review your notes and decide which ideas you will give more thought with a view to taking positive action on them.

If there are some ideas which you cannot see a use for in your present circumstances, don't discard them. But, focus on those which are most interesting and useful to you right now.

Combine Ideas: Many of the most important developments which have improved our way of life or some company's bottom line have not been unique or obscure; they are often produced when someone fits two or more fairly well-known ideas together in a new way.

Research for its own sake: Although most of us are all very busy just earning a living and caring for our families, it is worthwhile to spend some time every day looking for information and ideas which are not all concerned with those areas we are personally involved with.

Sometimes, we can make improvements to how we do something by adopting methods which were originally developed for other activities entirely.

If you have a problem of which you cannot think of a suitable answer, consider sharing it with capable people you know who are not involved in that area.

Never stop asking questions: If you start to feel comfortable with your present procedures and level of success, you are setting yourself up for future problems and disappointment.

Your colleagues and your competitors will be striving to overtake and pass you so they get more rewards which will almost certainly impact on your current position.

When you see something is working well, ask yourself how you might adapt the idea to another area of activity?

Could you put more of your time and resources into that area and perhaps reduce or discard your involvement in some others which don't give you similar levels of return?

Think about how you developed the idea which has proved so successful. Could you use that method to produce better procedures and outcomes in other areas?

When you see an idea which is improving the results in a different kind of business or even for a competitor, think about how you might adapt and even improve it so that you can use it in your own.

Ask everybody that is affected: I believe that many people and businesses overlook some very valuable sources for new ideas and improvements. I have worked in organizations where only certain levels of management were consulted about ways to improve their results.

When the Walt Disney organization was producing the early animated films which made it an international success, everyone who was employed by the

company was encouraged to suggest ideas for actions, jokes and other aspects of the characters in Snow White and the other films.

I don't know how many of the ideas from outside the “creative areas” were used, but I expect that there was a lot of valuable input. This would also have made all the employees feel more a part of the team and encourage them to promote the films to the people that they mixed with privately.

This informal process has become a business in itself with focus groups of people from various areas being asked for their opinions about everything from washing powder to who should run the country!

I have produced everything from simple tips to full-blown strategies after listening to people that deal with the products, customers and suppliers on a daily basis. The people who have this direct contact with the best and worst aspects of the business are an under-used source of information.

Some people avoid or ignore complaints but these can also be a source of improvements in your procedures and your public profile.

You may be unaware of problems with your products, services or methods. You are likely to improve your level of success and customer satisfaction if you welcome and act on all feedback, not just the positive material.

Preparing to Act on Your Idea

Review the feedback that you got. Even the feedback from people that are not involved directly in the area which you are focused on can be valuable. They may mention tips and methods which have been used on similar problems in their area of activity. This can sometimes be adapted quickly and fairly painlessly to your task.

There is another advantage; these ideas will seem to be very original because not many people look outside their own area for ways to solve the problems.



Now the really hard work begins. You have to see how well the idea can be adapted and used to get you closer to your goal to solve your problem.

You should ask yourself, "Do I have or can I obtain the resources needed to use this approach?"

"Is this method likely to be acceptable to the people that are required to implement it?"

"Is there sufficient time and support available for me or the people that have to do this work to be trained and get the job done?"

The last question is, "Is this the most appropriate and effective way to move forward?"

That is often the hardest question to answer because of our emotional attachment to our own idea.

We have probably invested a lot of time and effort in it.

But, it's much better to step back and take a fresh look at our idea before we invest too much in the way of resources in it. There might be a better way or even just some slight adaption which could give a better outcome if we direct those resources to it.

Creativity has a Dollar Value

If you think that you need to focus on adding more dollars to your bottom line and don't have time for investigating theories, please understand that creativity is an important part of the success of any major project ever undertaken.



Every one of them started with an idea. Often, the ideas were not pursued by the people that originally thought them up! Many people developed ideas but the actual realization of the idea as a practical process or product was done by someone else who had the imagination to see the possibilities and belief in their own ability to make a success of it.

In many companies and other organizations, the only new ideas which are valued come from management or highly paid consultants.

It's amazing that organizations which focus so much on reducing costs don't realize the value of encouraging and rewarding suggestions from staff that are doing the work with their processes and products every time. The employees' hands-on experience and dependence on the continuing success of the company gives them more motivation than most consultants display when they are called in on a short-term contract. In most cases, they won't suffer if their ideas don't work out as well as they claim.

If your business is cold to the possible value of suggestions "from the floor", it may be encouraging some of the brightest staff to look for jobs with competitors or to start their own businesses.

Then, the company will not only lose an under-valued employee, but may also find them developing their ideas to benefit the competition!

What Is an Idea Worth?

After I said that using your creative potential will be very valuable and help to improve every area of your life, you may be surprised if I say that an idea probably has very little value!

But, there’s an important proviso:

An idea has very little value by itself!

You must add value like the miner and the metallurgist add value to raw ore.

You strip away any rubbish which is attached to it, maybe add another idea or other techniques which can enhance its possible uses, put it in a setting where it will be most useful and apply it – take action.

All those steps are essential if you want to realize the value of the idea.

Otherwise, they are probably not worth even fifty cents a bucket full.

The first step is to remove anything which is not necessary for best use of the idea. Get back to the essentials and then you will be better able to see its true value to you.

Now, you consider whether the idea is strong enough by itself to produce valuable results.

If not, try adding another related idea which may also have less value by itself. That has often been the start of a very powerful combination.

Or, you might consider whether you could use it in another area which you have a related problem that you know about.

In fact, many great ideas have been used as is or adapted and proved valuable in quite different areas. That increases the value of the process or product enormously for almost no extra effort.

Then, the most important step.

Nothing really has value until you take action.

What if it Doesn't Work?

One of the biggest road blocks to greater use of our creative potential that we invent for ourselves is worry about failure. This fear has a technical name, Atychiphobia.



It can be very hard for some people to break through it, but it is essential that we do or we can never achieve and enjoy the results which we deserve and are truly capable of.

The first step is to try to pinpoint those factors which are holding you back from doing what you believe could improve your personal or business environment.

The limiting factors might include:

We aren't sure whether the idea has enough value to give us a return for the effort and time that we will put in.

We may fear that the people around us could start to view us in a negative way if we are not successful with this idea. So, we may decide to put off any action until we:

- Are better prepared
- Have better information
- Have more time

..... or whatever other excuse comes to our mind.

Some times we give too much importance to our memories of previous mis-steps. We feel that we would waste our time because we tried and failed before.

But, that's usually just an excuse like the other "reasons" which I listed.

We tend to over-estimate the potential downside of taking a particular action without giving it much careful consideration. If you take the time to carefully

weigh the potential benefits against the potential loss, you might decide that the risk is worth the investment.

Even if you don't get all the benefits you believe are possible, you will get experience that can help prepare you to tackle future projects with more confidence.

When we put off doing something, we are increasing the possibility that we will remain in our current unsatisfactory state for a long time to come and we may find that the opportunity is lost to us because someone else takes action while we dither and delay.

Sometimes, we can feel a bit insecure about our personal self-worth and worry that others will think less of us if we fail in the task.

But, we need to realize that most people probably will not spend much time thinking about it. They all have their own priorities and interests.

If we don't succeed something we attempt, they will judge us more on how we handle the disappointment.

If we pick ourselves up, gather what knowledge we can from the experience and start almost immediately to move forward in some other way, we won't hear much from anyone that matters about the bumps we encountered on the way.

If we are slow to recover from disappointment and focus on wailing about it, then we will find people less ready to support our future efforts.

The most important lesson which I have learned about failure is that everyone has them. The winners learn from them and move on.

Before they start a project, they evaluate the odds of success and the potential downside, as well as the possible benefits if it succeeds. They don't start until they have some idea of how they will, if necessary, handle problems or even failure.

But, they know some defeats are likely. They just make every effort to minimize their losses and maximize their gains.

The Creativity Killer – Television

I’m not going to suggest that you get rid of that super-plasma 3D baby-sitting technological icon in your living room – unless you really want to.

I just want you to be aware how television and a lot of other packaged information and entertainment can reduce the strength of your creative abilities and affect the quality of your interaction with the people around you.

I know there are many creative and highly intelligent people involved with producing TV programs, computer games and other media delights.

But, very few of these products help us, as individuals, improve our lives or those of our families.

That’s not their purpose!

Very few offer us the opportunity to be really creative or even fully inform us about the subjects which they address. They don’t have time or incentives to do any of that.

Almost everything is packaged to fit timeslots between the advertisements and much of the material is intended to reinforce particular views or encourage specific actions, such as buying a particular dog food.

I suggest that you think about what you watch and the messages which are blasted at you.

Make your own decision. Consult your vet or your dog about what food is best. Don’t be persuaded by the white-coated actor in the commercial!

Balance your TV or computer game time with some activities which will exercise your body and your mind.

Some of the suggestions in the next chapter may appeal to you or, at least, give you some things to consider.

Stimulate Your Ability to Create

Diary: This does not need to take a lot of your time and it can be a means of thinking about your experiences and your feelings privately.

A Diary or a Journal (I think of a Journal as a diary with other material apart from information about your daily activities in it), becomes more valuable to you as you add to it and time passes.

After a while, you start to see that so many of the things which we stress about do not have the dire consequences we feared so much.

Your diary can also be a safe and pleasant retreat which can prompt pleasurable memories of past happy times and perhaps encourage you to feel more positive about yourself and the world around you.

One tip I will emphasize - I believe that you will get the most benefit if you write in a paper diary or journal, not some sort of electronic version. For me, this is much more pleasant. Then, you can put any entries which you want to into your computer and produce a version for circulation among current and future family members.

That can be very interesting in its own way because you can add photos and other items of interest.

Walking: I was not interested in walking as a form of exercise in itself until just a few years ago.

My doctor advised me that it could have some definite benefits for many people that were unable to get much exercise in their normal day.

He said that some research even suggested that it helped us to relax if we avoided the temptation to take our personal or business problems on our walks.

Please leave your radio or other device at home and let your ears deliver the sounds of the area you live in and also any sounds which might be signals of approaching danger.

Please get yourself some good advice about the best shoes for you to wear. Their look is not really as important as the support and comfort they give to your feet and legs while you pound your way around.

The physical benefits of regular walking sessions are well documented. I believe they also help to keep our minds working better as well.

Get an attitude of gratitude: Too many people have become fault-finders



and wallow in negativity every day. This discourages them from doing anything which could improve their personal or business situation.

Their attitude attracts people with a similar bad outlook. They continually reinforce each others' despair.

They “know” there is no hope so they don't try anything and even stop looking for ways to improve their situation.

I'm not in favor of adopting a “Pollyanna” attitude, in that this is the best it can be and everything will always turn out alright.

I do believe that most of the people in the developed world can find some things to be grateful for.

I think that focusing on what is positive about our situation and what we can do to improve it will encourage better results than worrying or fearing what might happen.

Fly with eagles – don't be a chicken: That outlook will help us attract people with a similar attitude. They are the people that will encourage and support your ideas and actions just like you will theirs.

You will find that you will get better ideas and more enthusiasm when you are around like-minded people.

Find your best time: Although all human beings have the same basic internal clock, we differ widely about how productive we are at particular times of the day.

Some people find that they can focus on details much better in the morning than later in the day. For other people, the late afternoon is much better for this type of activity.

Not everyone has a job where they can decide what activities they do at what time. But, if you can do that, it is certainly something which you should test.

Try something different: Some people have said that they got some benefit when they stepped out of their comfort zone and tried some new activity. That might be as exciting as bungee jumping or as sedate as taking a class to learn the basics of oil painting.

You might even find your first visit to an opera or a rodeo gives a surge to your creative juices.

Attending some sort of live entertainment if you have been getting your thrills from a computer or television can be very good.

Improve your listening: Most people only focus a minimum of attention on the people they talk to every day. Try focusing more closely on what people say to you for just a couple of days. You’ll probably find that your interactions are much more enjoyable. Some deeper associations and creative ideas could result.

A nice by-product of this can be you become more interesting to the other people. That’s because good listeners are really hard to find.

Improve your observation: This is something which you could try when you are doing your walking exercise. Try to focus more closely on the people you see and the areas which you pass through.

When I first heard this suggestion, I did not think I would get much benefit because I’d been walking casually through that same area for years.

But, I was surprised to discover how much enjoyment I got from really looking more closely at many interesting birds, animals and buildings that had just been a passing background blur previously.

And the people! There were many interesting types and some of them were doing interesting things which I had never noticed before. That showed me that I was not as observant as I had believed.

The extra interest I showed in the people and their surroundings was returned and some enjoyable, casual friendships developed in the following months.

I also benefited in other areas from the stronger power of observation which I developed.

Reduce your intake of caffeine and other stimulants: I reduced my coffee intake and saved money by avoiding the casual visit to a coffee shop whenever I was in the city or at a loose end somewhere.

Caffeine and even fruit juices can affect the amount of water available to your brain and other parts of your body. That’s got to have a negative effect on your creative output and your health generally.

Other drugs, including legal alcohol, also affect your creativity. Some seem to make people think they are creative, at least until the drugs wear off.

Exercise

Creativity is basically a mental activity but the importance of exercising your body and maintaining it at the best possible level can't be overstated.

Before you start any form of exercise, please consult your doctor who can adjust his or her advice to fit with your personal situation and health history.

These are some general tips which I've found useful. They may or may not be appropriate for any particular reader's situation.

Water: You've probably read the same stuff I have about drinking eight to ten glasses of water (yes, straight water!) every day. It is important because your system needs that water just to keep going. If your body cannot dine enough water, one of the first organs to be affected in a negative way is your brain!

It's also important to realize that many activities take water from our system though we may think they are benefiting us.

Fruit juices, caffeine drinks and sugary sodas are likely to increase the amount of water we excrete, so we need to drink more water or less of the other fluids which tend to throw our systems out of balance.

Don't drink a lot of water at once. If you take part in a long run, make sure that you check with your doctor about when, what and where you should drink anything. In marathons and the like, even water can be a hazard for inexperienced runners.

Take it steady: We all want to be fit, but enthusiasm can cause problems if we start exercising at a level beyond our ability or increase our pace too soon.

Exercise with a friend: Wherever possible, arrange to exercise with someone you know well. Remember that it's not a competition, just a way of extending your time together so you can encourage and support each other. If your partner or a work colleague exercises with you, leave your personal or business problems at the door. Making that clear division between your

exercise sessions and other activities will make the exercise more enjoyable for both of you and also help you both to relax.

The other advantage of having an exercise partner is that it makes it less likely that you will not turn up for any minor reason.

Light exercise is also valuable: There are many forms of exercise apart from the intense physical ones.

Swimming is considered one of the most valuable and almost anyone can do some of that.

Exercises which improve your breathing and posture are also useful for almost everyone.

Yoga is claimed to be beneficial for many people but I have read that many inexperienced people are injured in their first few sessions. Always get at least a few sessions under professional guidance before trying to do it by yourself or with another equally inexperienced person.

The Myth of Multi-Tasking

I’m writing this chapter about multi-tasking for the same reason I wrote the earlier one about exercise.

Exercise is important to prepare and maintain our ability to produce creative ideas and act on them.

Multi-tasking can make producing creative ideas more difficult.

Multi-tasking is popularly believed to be the ability to do more than one task at a time. It is actually the ability to do a number of tasks together by switching from one to another rapidly.

Some people are claimed to be able to multi-task and produce good results faster than they could by doing one task at a time.

I believe, based on a lot of related reading and my own experience, that most of us will get better results when we focus on one significant task at a time.

When we try to multi-task, we have two or more tasks to perform and have to switch our attention from one to another and so on.

The research suggests that this is much easier for a few people but not easy for most of us.

Through every part of the various tasks, we must remember the significant parts of all the tasks being done, including specific information about the sequence and the stage we are at with each of them.

It’s generally believed that our brains need a measurable amount of time to adjust when we stop doing something and then start doing it again or take up some other task.

This suggests that there are time penalties of some sort when we try to do more than one task at a time.

I’ve seen many people who cannot give sufficient concentrated attention to one task, so there is a possibility of more errors when they try to do two or more.

It’s also likely that many people might feel more stress when they are trying to multi-task. That stress can have a negative effect on both your results and your general health.

Unless you are very confident about your ability to multi-task and have some results to back your belief, I suggest that you try to give each task full focus and see if you get the results you need that way.

Some people I work with say that they think and work better with some music which they like in the background. Others, including myself, feel they get better output without the music making a claim on their attention. It’s a form of multi-tasking after all.

You’ll have to do your own tests to see what works for you.

Getting the Best from your Creativity

These tips will help you to get the best results from your creative efforts.

Widen Your Horizons: Some people focus on their job or special interest almost to the exclusion of everything else.



That ensures that they will not get the best possible results. Everyone I know that is credited with improving processes or outcomes substantially has learned about many other activities, cultures and industries and found valuable information in those areas which have helped their main tasks.

Only companies and individuals that are determined to imitate the fate of the Dodo stick to the old motto, “It’s only good if we thought of it!”

Cross fertilization of ideas and methods makes for better results all round. Of course, there often needs to be some creative input too.

That usually comes from the people with the broadest knowledge base who are interested in a wide range of subjects. Usually, they try to get as much of their information from the sources, not just as packaged 30 second bites on the news at night.

Creativity with a firm base: The only sort of creative effort which is likely to have a good and lasting effect on people is produced by someone or a group that has a good grasp of the basics of what they do so that their output is likely to last.

We have all heard of some people that develop a following for their creative activities which are based almost exclusively on adapting the work of others.

Some of these people have the knowledge and skills to do original work but others rely on the qualities borrowed from the original work they adapt.

I recommend that you work through the basic skills required to produce good work in your area of activity. Your output will be of a higher standard and

you will be better able to adapt to changing conditions without relying on using other people’s originations to support you.

Be ready to let go: Every person that has tapped into their creative abilities will probably produce many more ideas than they will live long enough to use.

Despite this excess of material, they will all probably have times when they struggle to develop a particular idea but resist any suggestion to discard it or put it aside and start on something else.

To make the best use of our creativity in our business activities, we all need to be ready to step back and examine each project we start in a fairly unbiased way so that we don’t become so attached to a project that we waste time and resources on something which is not likely to give a reasonable return.

One question which I have found useful in this situation is to ask myself, “Could this be done better in another way?”

This is not as pointed as asking, “Is this project really any good?” but it can help me to look at other ways to achieve the desired result.

If I find some other possibilities among my notes or that someone else has perhaps already done something which even I find more appealing, it’s then a bit easier for me to let go and prepare for the next project.

I don’t just discard the work I have put time and thought into. I file anything which has some perceived potential for later review. Sometimes, that idea will be resurrected later on.

Best of Three

When we are starting to look for ideas, we may grab the first one which we feel might give us the result we are aiming for and prepare to develop it.

Over several years, I have found that the first pretty good idea which I find is almost never the best one. It only looks as good as it does because we are probably feeling a bit tired, and perhaps even desperate, for something which might just work.

Our desire to grab and run with the first half-good idea is also encouraged by the ever-present deadlines which all businesses are subject to these days.

Deadlines are no friend of inspiration. But, they are a fact of commercial life.

The best tip I can suggest is that you do as much research in as many areas as you can so that your mind and your files are well-stocked with examples of the best creative minds in your industry and as many others as possible.

It's also a good idea to learn about as many areas of human activity as possible.

When you are looking for ideas after a brain-storming session or to apply to a new task, keep looking until you have at least two, and preferably three ideas which might be suitable.

As well as comparing the best factors of each idea, think carefully about whether you might be able to combine parts of two or all of them to get the best solution.

Don't forget that the main question for every commercial project is not, "Is it necessary?".

The main question is "Will enough people buy it at a price that will be profitable?"

Here are some more questions which you may need to apply in specific circumstances:

1. What is the major problem it fixes or major benefit it delivers?
2. Will it have a long marketing life or be a flash in the pan?
3. Is it likely to attract patent or other claims?
4. The budget for the project?
5. The deadline for producing the working project?
6. The ability of the people who will have to use the item produced?
7. Are there potential problems in its production, distribution or use?
8. Will this have more appeal than competitive products or processes?
9. Are there likely to be refunds or other problems?
10. Can it be linked to public concerns such as the environment?
11. Can we develop an new improved version for next season?
12. Are there other areas which it might be adapted to work in?

Quick Steps to More Creativity

This section has some suggestions which will help you prepare physically and mentally to produce and act on more and possibly better creative ideas.

Get enough rest: Too many people work late into or even through the night before they have to come up with some productive ideas.

Your brain and the rest of your system need significant amounts of rest to prepare for an idea producing session.

Your subconscious can process great amounts of information but is probably less efficient when the whole body is tired.

If you are tired, you will not be able to recognize the best of the ideas which you and your colleagues produce.

If you do produce a great suggestion, you will not be able to present it in the best way.

Keep yourself positive: Everybody has a bad experience of some kind at times. But, too many people carry all those disappointments and hurts with them through the rest of their lives.

They contaminate all that they say and think. That makes them and their ideas less attractive to people that they deal with.



Accept that some of your best ideas will not ever be developed or may even be stolen. Don't focus on that. Put your attention to achieving greater success with your next effort. Success is the Best Revenge.

Your Thoughts, good or bad: Whatever you allow to come into your thoughts will affect your chances of success in any future endeavor. If you fill you mind with negativity, it will taint your subconscious and affect every attempt you make to improve yourself or your surroundings.

Study other people's ideas and productions: Can you adapt or improve them to the extent that it is a new idea?

Be a good loser: Always accept defeat or victory gracefully. Congratulate your rivals when they win.

Don't let them make a habit of it.

When you have a new problem: Check whether you might be able to adapt an old idea (yours or someone else's) to fix it.

I've got a drawer full of old notebooks. When I can, I pull out one of them and skim through it.

Any ideas which I think, on very quick examination, might have potential, I type into my Ideas file on the computer. I could write them in another notebook but I use the computer to sort the ideas and put a rating of each one's potential against it.

When I have checked a page, I discard it so there is room for more notebooks in the future.

You are likely to produce more and better ideas than I can.

But, please always remember that:

**A Bucket Of Ideas Is Worth Far Less Than
One Idea That Is Developed And Acted On!**

Useful Resources

In this section, I’ll mention a few things which I’ve found useful for developing and sharing my ideas and achieving my goals.

Mind Mapping Programs

I mentioned mind mapping in this book. You can use large sheets of paper (blank newsprint is ideal and very inexpensive if you can get the end of a roll from a newspaper) or a whiteboard.

But, using any of these computer programs will make it even easier to do. That means you will probably use whatever system you decide on more often. That will help you become more productive.

Some of the programs are completely free to use. And, as far as I am aware, all the paid programs offer a free trial version for you to download.

I have not used the Mac programs in this Chapter but I wanted to include some for readers who have that system and I believe these to be reputable offerings which are worth checking out.

Omnigraffle

<http://www.omnigroup.com/products/omnigraffle/> This is a program for the Mac computer system. There is a version for the iPad as well.

The cost is about \$USD 99 for the regular Mac version and \$USD 60 for the iPad version.

This program is a diagram production tool rather than being designed specifically for Mind Mapping. It is very powerful and the full version can export Microsoft Visio[®] files for use on Windows computers.

Unless you have some experience with this type of computer program, you will have to invest some time to learn to harness the power, but the results could be outstanding.

iThoughts HD

<http://www.ipadmindmap.com/iPadMindmap/Welcome.html> This is an inexpensive (\$USD 9.95) program which gives you the ability to produce and use Mind Maps on your iPad. There is also an iPhone version.

You can share your iThoughts Mindmaps with other popular mind mapping programs including Freemind, XMind, Novamind, MindManager, MindView and iMindmap!

This is, according to information I’ve read, a very versatile program which supports most of the rules which Mr. Tony Buzan, the *guru* of mind mapping, developed.

If you have or get the \$USD 40 Dock Connector from your Apple supplier, you can put the mind maps which you output on a larger screen. The tutorial is claimed to be very thorough and is presented as a mind map, so you get some practise with the concepts and can see the quality which can be produced with the program.

XMind (Windows)

<http://www.xmind.net/>

This program has a free version for personal use and a Pro version (about \$USD 50/year) which is used by companies and other organizations from small operations to some which are leaders in their areas of activity.

They even have business partners in China, Taiwan, Germany and Poland who support the program in those countries!

You can produce mind maps, fishbone diagrams and spreadsheets, export to some other mind map formats as well as .pdf and others.

The features of each version can be seen in video tutorials on the company website shown above.

Although it is obviously a very powerful program, learning to use it should not be difficult and the time spent is worthwhile.

FreeMind

<http://freemind.sourceforge.net/>

This is a powerful, free (Open Source) mind mapping program which is under constant development. It is developed in Java and has comparable features to other popular free and paid mind mapping programs.

It is well worth consideration.

Activity Programs

I have no ambition to become an artist but I have enjoyed drawing and other art activities as a way of relaxing.

I think that many readers will also find this worth trying. As well as exploring your ideas and probably also discovering that you can produce pictures of a reasonable standard after a while, it's a great way to switch off your day to day problems.

You can find local groups almost everywhere where you can learn the basics and meet people from all areas of life who are drawn together (sorry for the pun) by their common interest.

Many classes and group meeting are free or low-cost and usually very supportive to people that are just starting.

If you cannot find a group in your area, or if you want more interaction than just the regular meetings of your local group, you can find art groups (forums) on the Internet.

Some are provided by the producers or computer programs which the Forum Members use. They don't charge for use of these Forums and usually provide some help if there are questions related to their product(s). I have never seen any hard-sell in the Art Rage forum from the company – they are enthusiastic and very supportive. I would expect that other similar forums would also be light on commercial content.

Other forums are independent. These are usually free to use but are willing to accept donations from anyone using the forum to assist with the costs of providing and supporting it.

NOTE: as with any art-focused group, there are likely to be areas in these web sites where pictures and photos of nude people are shown for instruction or display. This is to be expected because that is one of the most popular topics for all kinds of artists through centuries.

Don't worry, because those areas are usually well-signposted and you probably won't see anything you don't want to, unless you go looking for it.

Web Canvas

<http://webcanvas.com>

This is a web site offering forums for artists at all levels who are interested in many different types of art.

I was very impressed with the site and the friendly, generous spirit of the people in those areas I looked at.

This could be a good place to check out different types of art work which you might be interested in trying yourself, either on your computer or in the regular way.

Computer Programs

Art Rage

<http://www.artrage.com/index.html>: This is my favorite art program and online art community.

The program is about \$USD 40 for the Standard version and \$USD 80 for the Pro version.

Their Forums are at <http://www2.ambientdesign.com/forums>

The program was developed by people with a background in high-end computer graphics. There is a free version and a couple of paid version. The focus is to simulate on your computer the effects you could get if you were

actually using the method (pen, ink, pastel, oil painting etcetera ad infinitum) on real paper.

You can even get free add-ons from within the forum which reproduce the effects of particular brands of artists' paints and pencils, etc! They may not be 100% accurate but apparently are a good guide, especially at the price! Support advice and criticism (when asked for) from professionals and very experienced amateurs would be worth paying for.

But, Art Rage is not the only program which focuses on reproducing the “real-life” experience as closely as possible.

Art Weaver

<http://www.artweaver.de/>: (from the web site which is in English)

“Artweaver allows you to paint creatively with the help of a huge range of painting tools. You can create sketches from photos or just experiment with colors.

For professional users, Artweaver offers layers, group layers and support for the PSD file format. It is also possible to load and run Photoshop compatible filters (only [Artweaver Plus](#)).”

There is a free version and a Plus version which is about \$USD 40

Dogwaffle

<http://www.thebest3d.com/dogwaffle/>: This program claims to be the best for “Fun, Fast & Affordable PC Software for Artists who love to Draw, Sketch, Animate and Paint!”

That may be argued by some other companies but it is very versatile.

There is a free version which is fairly old. The current version is about \$USD 99.

(From the web site, slightly edited) “It is a Paint Program. Not another Photo editing program. Not really just an imaging tool. Not an image conversion tool, although it can serve that purpose too. The primary reason for Dogwaffle is for you to paint - without the mess, the occasional spills or the funny

fumes. Much of Dogwaffle's functionality is accessible through plugins. They are highly optimized for speed, and many of them operate in real time.”

There are more free programs listed and reviewed at

<http://www.snapfiles.com/Freeware/gmm/fwgraphicedit.html>

I cannot guarantee any of the information or products on any of the sites listed above. Please do your own checking.

Annie's Afterword

I am glad and grateful that you are using my ebook to learn how to find and develop more and better ideas using creativity which you may have been unaware you had.

Remember that every person has creative resources within and around them.

I wish you all that you dream of for yourself and much more besides!

Annie Bushell

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