

Kick Starting Creativity for IBA

**As presented by Joe Fournet, President/Creative Director
Ideas & MORE**

I’ve been asked to talk on idea generation and creativity in the business world as well as approaches to creativity in other countries. I’ll touch on these aspects as well as past experiences with companies here.

“Kick Starting Creativity Without Screwing Up the Idea”

Plus

Eight & MORE Guidelines to Enhance Your Creativity

Creativity - the spark that ignites what you say and how you say it.

So what does creativity mean to you? It can mean different things to different people.

I would suggest to you that creativity is a state of mind. And when the mind is having fun, creativity is boundless. Creativity occurs when people perceive there are no limits. Creativity can also be defined as the ability to see, feel, touch, think and imagine what one has not seen, felt,

touched, thought or imagined before.

My favorite definition: Creativity is “intelligence having fun.”

And if you’re not having FUN in this business, it’s time to hang up the spurs! OK, how many of you think you’re creative?

Here’s a News Flash – You all are! Each one of us represents a different perspective, a different creative slant. If in doubt, think of this: If you have the ability to challenge your own imagination and stimulate thoughts to lead you to a new level of solution, you’ll be realizing your own sense of creativity.

You’ve now heard **two** of at least eight tips to enhance your creativity: **Have fun** and **believe you are creative**.

Along with creativity, the power of ideas can’t be underestimated. Even the simplest idea, creatively and smartly executed, can differentiate the forgettable from the memorable. It’s like a mix of logic and magic. For best results, ideas should be media and discipline neutral. Don’t start

out with just an idea for television or Twitter. You’re limiting yourself if you do. In being media and discipline neutral, you have no boundaries, and your wacky creative ideas may just be easier to sell. After all, clients only care about how we’re going to make that idea work and be relevant.

I asked you earlier how many consider yourselves creative. The legendary creative guru Lee Clow of TBWA Chiat/Day and the maestro behind Apple’s advertising had this to say about creatives:

“Creative people are 50% ego and 50% insecurity. They need to constantly be told they're good and they're loved.” So, for all of us egotistical, insecure so and so’s, remember this **(Tip #3): Never fall in love with your idea. There’s always a better one around the corner.** And, it may not even come from you!

Tip #4: Don’t ever underestimate the power of your mind or your imagination. Don’t ever be afraid to ask, “Why, Why not or What if?”.

Now for a number of creativity techniques!

We’ll call the next **variety pack Tip #5:**

Ye Olde Creativity Survival Kit to the rescue. Get any sort of container (old, cleaned out paint can is great; found mine in the crayon section –aimed at kids- of a crafts store) in which you place whatever makes you FEEL creative and THINK creatively. Note: Crayons can be a part of your kit. The everyday, “run-of-the-mill” brilliant ideas usually take the smaller, regular size crayons; but for bigger, giant-sized ideas, use bigger crayons! ☺

If you’re thinking this is just silly, well you’re absolutely right. In this industry, silly is sometimes serious business.

Thinking at Warp Speed – Generating ideas at breakneck speed is a great way to capture ideas on Post-it Notes (one per note) in answering a specific question to solve a problem. You don’t have time to analyze and judge; you circumvent fear (of a bad idea). Basically, you’re generating 50 ideas in 5 minutes or, say, 100 ideas in 10 minutes.

Drill Down Technique – How do you know when you’ve hit THE idea? There’s more than one approach and one that may not be widely used. This is a timed exercise, usually about five minutes. Discuss among your group and then choose what you consider to be the best five ideas. **ELIMINATE THEM.** Choose five more. **ELIMINATE THEM.** When you’re down to one, maybe this **last idea** is the best one, or at least one to which you may not have paid much attention.

Giant Post-it Notes – Make for an attractive “idea wall.” Use these big-ass yellow or white Post-It Notes that have adhesive on the back for easy sticking, and removing, from the wall. Great for idea posting, small group brainstorming and open-door policy “idea addition.” While at Halliburton I did this. I passed the word as to what I was working on and as long as my door was open, other office mates could drop by and contribute. At the very least, the smaller Post-Its make up a good “idea door” that you see whenever your door is closed.

A big white board attached to the wall also makes for good ideation involvement.

Tip #6: As ideas are developed, make sure their essence is refined. Make sure your ideas are clear and that you can explain their basic value in about 20 seconds. This makes it easier for the idea to gain acceptance.

Remember the Octopus ad – Visual needed to carry the ad and bring reader right into it; illustration used rather than stock photography.

Tip #7: Even though this advice is aimed toward a company’s management, you need to keep it in mind because it goes to the culture of a company: **A.)** One doesn’t manage creativity; one manages FOR creativity. Companies should provide an environment that is open and receptive to new ideas. Consider how Pixar Studios deals with failure – they accept failure and build it into their culture as part of the process; they don’t ridicule it, but they honor and embrace it.

Companies should also consider adopting their “suckless mentality” – When presented with something that doesn’t quite measure

up, be lighthearted about it when you say something like “Gee, that really sucks. However, if your tried this or that, it might suck less.”

Tip #7 B.) CMOs must have creativity in themselves, for the good of the business and their own teams, so says Mark-hans Richer, Sr. VP-CMO Harley-Davidson. **Quote-** “Creativity as a weapon of business is under-leveraged not for lack of ideas, but for lack of courage to use them or refusal to give up on them. The phrase, ‘We don’t have time for creativity,’ is not something you would ever hear in the most successful businesses.” **End Quote.** *Remember ads for Harley & Halliburton*

Tip #8: Just remember: Trying to satisfy everybody never got anybody anywhere. Focus on what’s important, then do it.

Tip #9: Before you can have creative, you have to have a strategy, and that marketing strategy, along with the creative, must be clear, concise and on target. There is absolutely no excuse for presenting creative that makes no sense or doesn’t follow or illustrate the

marketing strategy. Be careful, though. Your message will be diluted and possibly even confusing if the creative is **too cute, too complex** or **just plain dumb**.

Tip #10: Don't let the execution bury the idea. The computer and software are just tools to enhance the idea, not to compete with, replace, or screw it up. Use your own computer – your brain – and be able to jot down your thoughts on paper or the infamous cocktail napkin.

Tip #11: Take time to think. There's always more than one way to do something. That's where creativity and brainstorming come into play. It is possible to brainstorm by yourself. No interruptions, 30-minutes, a writing instrument and paper, and then watch out! Remember . . . you still need to focus on one question or statement you're trying to address.

And finally, Tip #12: Do **not** bring a DEAD CAT without a shovel! ☺ In other words, never present a problem without bringing the shovel – at least two possible solutions. In doing so, you save time if one of these is adopted, and you can share your creative thinking while

learning more about what’s important to your boss or colleague; keep in mind, you may not know all there is to know about the situation.

Lastly, a few comments on my experiences with other countries and their perspectives on marketing: I’m registered on a site called **AllExperts (www.allexperts.com)**. Created in early 1998, AllExperts was the very first large-scale question and answer service on the net! They have thousands of volunteers, including top lawyers, doctors, engineers, scientists and a lot more. It’s part of About.com, which is part of The New York Times Co.

I’m listed as an “expert” in business marketing, which can cover a vast array of topics. I’ve received inquiries from countries such as Pakistan, India, Norway, England, and, of course, here in the US. Some have simple questions pertaining to how to market the launch of a new business while others have very complicated questions.

Mostly, though, everyone wants to know something about the basics of how best to use marketing and creativity in their decisions.

Generally speaking, my experience tells me that the European countries tend to have a better handle on this than those in the Middle East and other parts of the world. And I base that opinion primarily on the quality of questions and the communication used. The ability to properly express oneself to be easily understood cannot be emphasized enough.

Then there are the cultural issues regarding the nature of advertising and what’s conveyed to the public. Western Europe, South America and Australia tend to be much more liberal and permissive in what’s shown in the media compared to the US and Eastern Europe.

Summing Up:

What this all comes down to is simple: Those involved in idea generation and all aspects of creativity must still deliver what companies need most: *creative solutions to business problems*. We need to be creative business thinkers as well as storytellers in relating to our audiences. Don’t be just an order taker – don’t be more the follower rather than the contributor – otherwise, you’ll be selling both your

company and yourself short. Be an innovative creative thinker; you’ll be better for it. **Thank you very much!**

Questions & Comments can be sent to me at j4net@ideasmore.net.