



Creativity at Work

HOW TO FIND CREATIVE
SOLUTIONS AND DRIVE
INNOVATION SUCCESS

By Linda Naiman
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**“WHEN YOU’RE
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WHY CREATIVITY IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS

Whenever there is a crisis, there is also an opportunity. The question is, how do you discover opportunity in times of turbulence and chaos? Creativity gives you the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena and to generate solutions. When you’re faced with unprecedented problems, creativity is more important than ever.

You might think that creativity takes up too much time or that you don’t have the resources to be creative. Know this: If you can provide creative solutions your customers love, you will always be in demand.

You are creative in business when you conceive and implement new or significantly improved products, services, experiences or processes that create value for your customers. The key to success is to focus on learning about your customers and prospects. The more you understand their pain points and unmet needs, the better your chances of creating winning solutions.

An Adobe study in 2014 found that companies that embrace creativity outperform rivals in revenue growth, market share and talent acquisition. Additionally, creative companies get products to market faster, enjoy a price premium from buyers, have more people who speak on their behalf, and disrupt their traditional mark

The surprising connection between resilience, gratitude and creativity

Deepak Chopra says, "The best use of imagination is creativity. The worst use of imagination is anxiety."

It's hard not to worry when the world seems to be falling apart, so my advice is to attend to your well-being, to optimize your body, mind and spirit. Make it a habit to be grateful for at least five things every day.

When you face a setback with an attitude of gratitude, it does not mean you deny the situation. It means calling forth your creative powers to transform your crisis into an opportunity. Gratitude is the antidote to anxiety and fear, allowing feelings of grace, well-being and optimism to flow, thus making us more resilient.

Creativity has the power to heal and nurture the soul. When we are completely absorbed in an activity we find enjoyable, we open our awareness to new perceptions and new perspectives. When we experience positive emotions, we enhance our ability to solve problems and come up with creative solutions.

How to inspire creativity in your business

Creativity requires a beginner's mind, curiosity and an openness to exploring different perspectives. Creativity by definition is about creating something novel; therefore you can't tell in advance if it will work out, so it's best to treat it as an experiment.

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—DEEPAK CHOPRA

Creative Resilience: How to flourish in the face of life's challenges. My online course is available on-demand.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR CREATIVE CONVERSATIONS

1. Be curious
2. Encourage each person's contribution
3. Build on ideas from others
4. Suspend premature judgment
5. Ask plenty of open-ended questions. Especially "What if" questions
6. Listen for connections between ideas
7. Explore underlying assumptions and beliefs
8. Encourage diverse perspectives
9. Create a shared understanding
10. Don't be sarcastic
11. Make your partner look good
12. Play with ideas
13. Say thank you

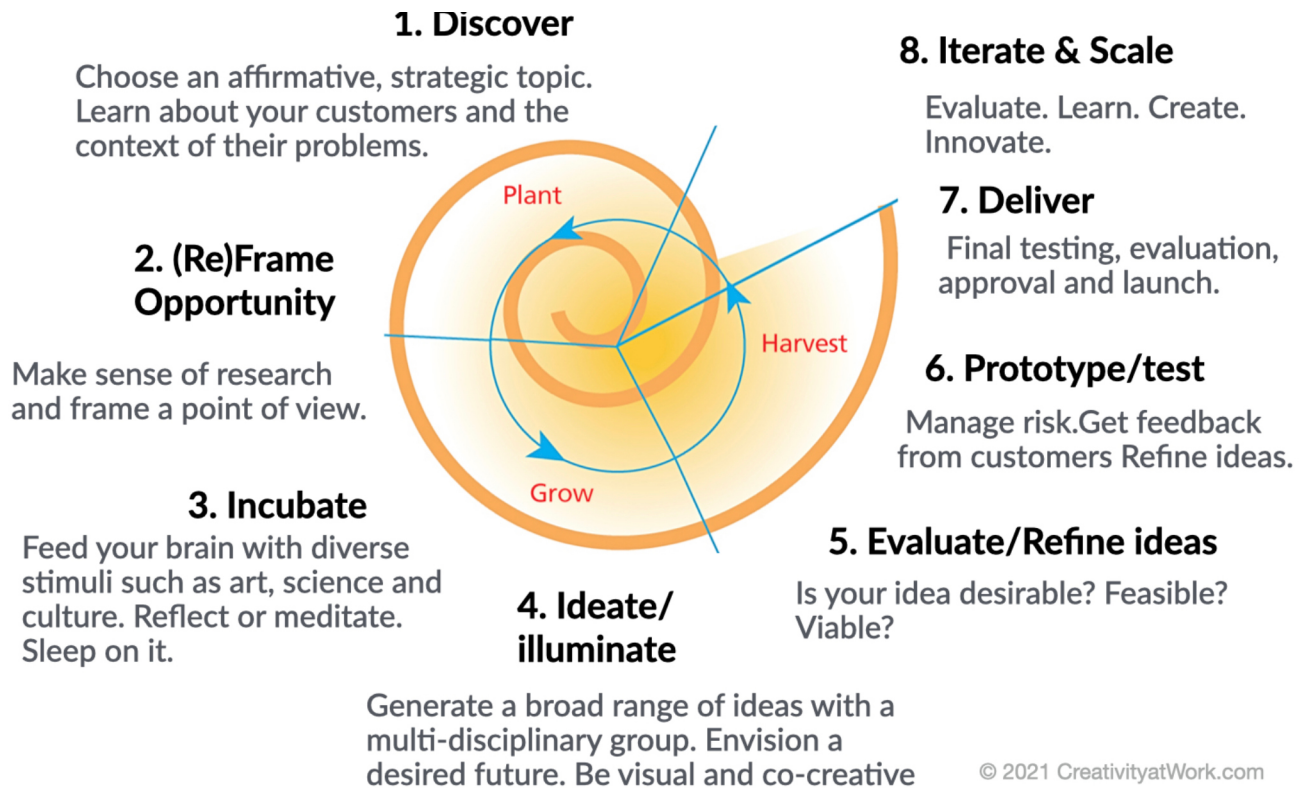
How do you find breakthrough ideas?

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Ph.D., documented a process common to Nobel Prize-winning scientists, ground-breaking inventors, artists, and Pulitzer Prize-winning writers:

1. **Immersion:** total engagement in their work with deep, unremitting focus.
 2. **Incubation:** a period of rest and recovery when they are not at all thinking about their work.
 3. **Insight:** the occurrence of "aha" or "eureka" moments – the emergence of new ideas and growth in their thinking.
- Carve out time for creative explorations on your own and with your team.
 - Create an idea-friendly atmosphere by establishing rules of engagement for creative conversations.
 - Make it safe for people to express their ideas freely without fear of ridicule. Get comfortable with uncertainty, and be willing to see your experiments fail.
 - Your experiments are opportunities to learn. You can manage risk by limiting the scope of the project and focusing on creating solutions on the basis of what you understand about your customers' needs and desires.

HOW TO MANAGE THE CREATIVE PROCESS

THE CREATIVITY AT WORK FRAMEWORK



This step-by-step guide will help you navigate the creative process and provide some structure.

This process is best done with a group to capture a diversity of perspectives and over a number of days in one-to-two-hour segments, not during one sitting.

1. DISCOVER YOUR OPPORTUNITY:

Learn what you can about your customers' pain points, needs and desires. Gather data you have about your market, including analytics, economic data and data about trends and technology.

2. FRAME YOUR OPPORTUNITY:

Make sense of your research by looking for patterns, themes and insights. Write a list of clear opportunity statements, and identify the problems to be solved, e.g., "our customer needs a better way to ___ because___."

Reframe problem areas as opportunities by writing another list of questions starting with "how might we." Choose a project scope that feels actionable and interesting.

3. INCUBATE:

Incubation time allows for your analytical Disconnect from all your devices. Go for a walk to refresh your brain and let new ideas bubble up.

4. IDEATE:

Generate multiple solutions (see brainstorming tips on the following pages). The first idea is rarely the best idea. Creativity often involves generating a lot of ideas, some good, some bad. The key is to be open to exploration and refine the concepts based on feedback and testing. See also: [Your guide to successful brainstorming](#)

5. EVALUATE:

Evaluate your ideas from a variety of angles, such as how easy it would be to implement, how it would affect your place in the market and how likely it would be to succeed.

Challenge your assumptions. Choose the ideas that best meet all your criteria.

6. MAKE THINGS:

Create a model or a mock-up to illustrate your ideas and give your target something to react to positively or negatively.

7. TEST:

Validate your ideas and your conclusions with your target group. This is the best way to mitigate risk. Be sure to listen to feedback and look for ways to make your idea better.

8. REFINE YOUR IDEAS:

Depending on the outcome of your test, you may have to repeat steps 1–6 before you find a winning solution.

9. DELIVER:

Turn your ideas into action. Formulate an action plan to launch your innovation. Who is going to do what and by when? How will you measure success?

10. SCALE:

Look for ways you can improve, innovate on your product or service and scale up.

[Click here if you'd like to learn tools and techniques for each step of the creative process through coaching and training.](#)

Look for opportunities to create amazing experiences for your customers, and find ways to give them what they most need. They will thank you.

BRAINSTORMING TIPS

- Follow the rules of engagement on P. 5
- Frame your opportunity/challenge before you brainstorm
- Make sure everyone has a voice
- Go for quantity
- Record all ideas on a board and make them visible
- Take a break before moving on to the evaluation phase

Building Stronger Connections and Fostering Creativity: It's all about relationships

Understanding another person's perspective is crucial. By stepping into their shoes, we calm the emotional centres in our brains, fostering a sense of connection and collaboration. This "we're all in this together" feeling strengthens bonds and creates a more positive communication environment.

Focus on truth-telling and testing assumptions (candour and caring), which builds and expands trust.

Active listening is key to unlocking creativity. By listening to connect, we can identify linkages between seemingly disparate ideas, sparking innovation. Look for connections between ideas to spark creativity.

Set aside judgment. When people feel safe from criticism, they're more likely to share freely, leading to a more creative and productive exchange.

Ask open-ended questions you genuinely don't have answers to, and be comfortable with "not knowing." Stop asking questions to confirm your opinion or influence others during the ideation phase.

Trust is a two-way street: Believe in others' ability to think, be curious, and listen well. This trust creates a space where great ideas can flourish.

When we believe in others' abilities to think critically, have new ideas, and be curious listeners, we prime their brains for optimal creativity.

AVOID THESE BRAINSTORMING TRAPS

1. Lack of preparation. You can't just call a meeting and ask people to brainstorm on the spot.
2. Lack of focus. Proceeding with a poorly defined topic.
3. Judging every idea as it is put forward.
4. Letting a few participants dominate the discussion.
5. Lack of structure.
6. Fear of being wrong or stupid.
7. No follow-through. Brainstorming is a waste of time if no action is taken.

When you turn your creative ideas into action, you are creating something new (by definition) and venturing into the unknown. Be prepared for your inner critic. It will judge your ideas, and cause you to doubt.

If you find yourself procrastinating, being hyper-rational or getting bogged down by perfectionism, know these are sure signs your inner saboteurs are obstructing your performance.

Meet your inner judge and inner sage

Your Inner Judge and Saboteurs will want to shoot down your ideas and cause you to doubt or second-guess yourself.

Your Saboteurs are the voices in your head that generate negative emotions when you handle life's challenges, including any pursuits involving creativity and innovation. They live in the survival part of your brain.

These negative emotions are only helpful for a moment as they alert you to dangers or issues. However, staying in these emotions hurts your ability to see clearly and choose the most impactful response.

Your Sage, on the other hand, lives in the "thrive" part of your brain, which consists of the middle prefrontal cortex, the empathy circuitry, and the right brain. It generates positive emotions while handling life's challenges.

These include empathy, compassion, gratitude, curiosity, joy of creativity, and calm, clear-headed laser-focused action. This region is wired for creativity and big-picture awareness of what is important and the best course of action. The key is to recognize when your saboteurs take over, intercept them, take command and get back into Sage Mode.

Source: Shirzad Chamine, author of Positive Intelligence

Learn the 7 ways your inner judge sabotages you

**Book your free
consultation today**

Book a free consultation to gain insight into your saboteurs and how they impact your leadership, creativity and business. No strings attached.

TWELVE QUESTIONS TO SPARK CREATIVITY

Embrace a mindset of curiosity. Ask these questions throughout your creative process and whenever you are problem-solving.

1. What is the current situation? The opportunity? Identify pain points.

2. Who is involved? What do you need to understand about your customer/ target market?

3. Why is it happening? Ask why five times to get to the root cause.

4. How might we re-articulate problem areas as opportunities?

5. What if? Imagine possibilities from different perspectives.

6. What else? Don't stop at your first few ideas. Go beyond the obvious solutions.

7. Is this the best we can do? Aim higher.

8. Why not? What assumptions should you be challenging? Where might you be blind to new opportunities?

9. What wows? Review your options and choose winning ideas on the basis of what will appeal to your target group.

10. What do you think? Invite participation.

11. How will this work? Make a business case for your ideas, and test them with your target group to get their feedback.

12. What's next? How might I use our existing know-how (competencies) to enter new markets and flourish in them?

ABOUT LINDA NAIMAN



Linda Naiman is founder of Creativity at Work and co-author of Orchestrating Collaboration at Work.



I hope you have enjoyed the practices I've shared in this ebook. I use these in my own work and with clients.

As the founder of Creativity Work, I help innovators get unstuck, overcome obstacles, unleash their creative potential, and take inspired action through training, coaching, and consulting.

I specialize in:

1. Creativity, collaboration, and innovation skills training
2. A hybrid on-demand course on developing creativity and resilience
3. Coaching for creativity, innovation and mental fitness

Over the past two decades, I've had the privilege of working with some of the world's leading organizations, such as Cisco, Dell, BASF, the UN, and the US Navy.

I've helped them approach challenges by engaging them in a whole-brain approach to creative problem-solving which includes strategies from the worlds of art, design and neuroscience. I've witnessed how these methods can spark breakthrough ideas, foster collaboration, and drive innovation.

Testimonial

Innovation is the key to the company's future success and the global race for innovation is getting intense. Linda Naiman's innovation workshop is really inspiring and engaging as it guides us through different skills and tool kits to explore the potential power of our minds and shows us how to lead the product innovation to business success.

— Dr. Knut Zoellner, Vice President, Technology, Innovation and Projects, BASF Polyurethane Specialties (China)

Book a free consultation

If you are ready to take your creativity and innovation to the next level and achieve breakthrough results, let's chat.

**Book your free
consultation today**



QUOTES TO INSPIRE CREATIVITY AT WORK

**"VULNERABILITY IS
THE BIRTHPLACE OF
INNOVATION,
CREATIVITY AND
CHANGE."**

—BRENÉ BROWN, PROFESSOR
AND AUTHOR

**"WHEN WE ENGAGE IN
WHAT WE ARE NATURALLY
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QUALITY OF PLAY, AND IT
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CREATIVITY."**

—LINDA NAIMAN,
FOUNDER, CREATIVITY AT WORK

**IF YOU HAVE IDEAS,
BUT DON'T ACT ON
THEM, YOU ARE
IMAGINATIVE BUT
NOT CREATIVE.**

—LINDA NAIMAN,
FOUNDER, CREATIVITY AT
WORK

**"CREATIVITY IS ONE OF
THE LAST REMAINING
LEGAL WAYS OF
GAINING AN UNFAIR
ADVANTAGE OVER THE
COMPETITION."**

—ED MCCABE, ADVERTISING
EXECUTIVE