

Creativity Checklist

“The hallmark of creative people is their mental flexibility... Sometimes they are open and probing, at others they’re playful and off-the-wall. At still other times, they’re critical and faultfinding. And finally they’re doggedly persistent in striving to reach their goals. From this I’ve concluded that the creative process consists of our adopting four main roles, each which embodies a different type of thinking... These roles are: Explorer, Artist, Judge and Warrior.”

- Roger Von Oech



All of us are creative. Ever dodge an auto accident? That was a creative moment! If we want our careers and businesses to succeed we have to be creative there too. Consider the below as a way to spur your creativity:

❑ Information is everywhere. Where can we find new information or analyze old information differently? You can get a statistic for everything. As taught in the book *Freakonomics*, you have to be looking in the right places. For example, law enforcement will applaud the fact that there has been a reduction in the homicide rate in most major cities. What they fail to mention is that

much of this reduction is due to improved medical care of the injured. Because there are more emergency vehicles and people using better equipment, more people are surviving serious gun wounds, etc. The more telling statistic would be the attempted homicide rate. Something that may be more difficult to capture, but more relevant to crime prevention.



- How do you judge the value of the idea? Ultimately, the value of any idea in the business world has one purpose to it—to make money or deliver more value. The Employee Suggestion Form provides a number of variables to consider including labor, equipment, and cost of other resources, as well as the potential bottom line benefit to the company.
- How can you give your idea a sense of urgency? How can you make this idea come to fruition in half the time? What partner can you use to accelerate the idea? All of us are familiar with products and ideas that have exploded on the scene because of a “viral” internet campaign. Perhaps you can work with a partner who already has access to customers, clients, or markets.
- How can you shake up a routine? Perhaps instead of reading your email throughout the day, you only do so at 10 and 3. How can you change your work environment? Perhaps you rearrange the furniture or equipment in your office. Perhaps you get some work done at the library where there are no distractions. One printing company that used HR That Works had all the employees work with a paint contractor to spruce up the entire office. You’d be amazed by the impact it had on the workforce, clients, and profitability as well.
- How could you do it faster, better, cheaper or completely different?
- How do other industries do it? How do they do it in other countries?
- How will it be done in 15 years from now? (Take a look at *Futurist Magazine*)
- As they say in Six Sigma, what’s the “fifth why?” Ask why? why? why? why?...and why?
- Get outside your head. What would your kid, favorite comedian, business guru, or wacky uncle say about it?
- What’s the big picture? What is the possible lateral or precessional effect? (i.e., the railroads created a demand for shovels and jeans.)
- What “off the wall” idea might actually work? How can you test it without causing any harm? (Like sending out a crazy ad to a small mailing list.)
- Where can you go to a creative place to spark ideas? (Hold your next meeting in a kindergarten class or museum, there are many other creative environments available.)
- What diverse teams can you create to spark ideas? (Marketing and HR to build the employee brand.)
- How can we experience it at a deeper, more intense level? (i.e., adding aromatherapy, video or music to an entry or waiting area.)
- How can we make it lighter and more fun? (i.e., turning the act of making cold calls into a game.)
- How can it look, feel, smell, sound, or taste different? (Starbucks tapped into everyone of these!!)
- How would nature do it? How does physics, chemistry, or biology apply? (Think of all the medical breakthroughs generated this way.)
- Ask yourself “what if” or “why not?” (i.e., what if cars all got 100 miles per gallon?)



- What if there were no rules? Or completely new ones? (i.e., what if there was a way we could both win?)
 - What cool name could you give your idea? (i.e., Super Gigantic Sales Game.)
 - Pick a few magazines like Popular Mechanics, Fast Company, Scientific American, The Futurist, etc. Do the articles spark any ideas?
 - Not all ideas are good ones. What could go wrong here? What's the worst case scenario?
 - What does your intuition tell you? Have you allowed silence to work its magic?
 - Does the idea have stand-alone value to it? Should you make a separate business out of it?
 - What theory or hypothesis is behind your idea? What if it's proved wrong? What if you used a different one?
 - There are no bad ideas. The only loss is the failure to implement the good ones.
 - What creative ideas appear in your dreams? How can you "plant the seed" to dream about a problem from work?
 - The worse thing that can happen is if your idea is laughed at. Be prepared for this and learn from it. Remember, it is the last laugh that counts!
 - Try wearing crazy hats, clown noses, Groucho glasses, and other fun props during a brainstorming meeting. Check out the Oriental Trading Company.
 - How will you market your idea? To whom? What internal press release could be issued about your idea? What headline would you use? (Joan comes up with a crazy customer idea that could double sales!)
 - Small ideas are just as good as big ones. Often they are quickly implemented, have a bottom line impact, and come with less risk.
 - Are you truly receptive to others' creativity? What good idea have you listened to lately?
 - Don't be afraid of making mistakes. What would you try if you knew it couldn't fail?
 - Lastly, consider monthly suggestion/creativity meetings where each employee is required to bring a suggestion. Reward every suggestion with a few bucks, lottery ticket or raffle ticket to make it fun.
- These are some ideas that can help you along. Excellent books on creativity include *Orbiting the Giant Hairball* by Gordon MacKenzie and *A Whack Upside the Head* or *Kick in the Seat of the Pants* by Roger Von Oech and *I-Power* by Boardroom Classics.