

Simple Arithmetic For Stretching Creativity© by Judy Feld

Where do those great new business ideas come from? Who are the "innovators" that we all admire so much? Are they a breed apart--the "creative geniuses" that somehow are born that way? To answer those questions I invite you to look in the mirror--and smile at the creative YOU. Whether you have always thought of yourself as creative, or wondered if that quality could be developed "at this late date", we have some good news and some simple arithmetic for stretching your creativity. Watch what happens, prepare to be surprised and enjoy the great results!

Creativity expert Michael Michalko, the author of "Thinkertoys", one of my favorite reference books, says, "Prepare yourself to benefit from chance events, accidents, and failures: "Whenever we attempt to do something and fail, we end up doing something else. That is the first principle of creative accident. We may ask ourselves why we have failed to do what we intended, which is a reasonable question. But the creative accident provokes a different question: What have we done? Answering that question in a novel, unexpected way is the essential creative act. It is not luck, but creative insight of the highest order."

So how does the simple arithmetic of creativity work?

MULTIPLY: Think in terms of large quantities of ideas. Multiply now; edit later. How many different alternatives or solutions can you come up with--no matter how unconventional (or how "obvious")? Write them all down. You can multiply the possibilities by using visual aids: charts, diagrams, pictures,...even collages. Keep on going. Yes...let there be quantity--you can prune for quality later on.

~**Coach's Comment**~: Encourage your brain to make connections among seemingly unrelated or dissimilar subjects or ideas or objects. When one concept occurs to you, consider its opposite as an alternative. Think metaphorically. Einstein often drew analogies with everyday occurrences such as rowing a boat or standing on a platform while a train passes by.

Archimedes said, "Give me a lever long enough and a place to stand and I will move the earth". For more on Archimedes and other related articles please go to <http://www.coachingsuccess.com/progress.html>

DIVIDE: Use a filtering process to sort, divide, prioritize (similar to how we filter our E-mail and thus divide it into manageable categories). This allows for low-risk experimentation. Put structures in place to maximize the probability of success. Be flexible enough to change direction and fluid enough to expand your possibilities to include the outrageous without upsetting what is already working. Divide your working day and week to set aside time for creativity, innovation, and brainstorming. Invent new kinds of information filters that suit your business, while making use of those that have already proven to be effective for you.

~~Coach's Comment~~:

Utilize all of your own talents, gifts, education, experiences (yes, even those dubious "learning experiences"). What haven't you used in years? It may be dusty, but not broken or stale. Give it a try! Modify and adapt practices from other businesses, other professions and other people as well.

ADD: Be on constant alert to items you can add to your treasure chest of creativity. The "containers" can be files, a box, a drawer, a bulletin board, notebooks, and/or, of course, your computer. Or an actual treasure chest. What goes into this treasure chest? Whatever feeds and nurtures your own innovative process: articles, ads, ideas, quotes, cartoons, pictures, doodles, words, diagrams, etc. When you are ready to create, dip into this treasury for connections and new ideas.

~~Coach's Comment~~:

Break your own habits when you are assembling these creative "props". Look beyond what you have collected in the past. William James said "Genius, in truth means little more than the faculty of perceiving in an unhabitual way."

SUBTRACT: Eliminate all the old rules, methods, techniques, and paradigms (yes, that much-used label) to clear the space for what is truly new and innovative. Then you can "try on" many new ways of looking at a situation or solving a problem without the burden of what you have been taught in the past. A quote from Margaret J. Wheatley: "The things we fear most in organization - fluctuations, disturbances, imbalances-are the primary sources of creativity."

~~Coach's Comment~~:

While you're at it, eliminate the clutter in your workspace and in your life. This includes all the "stuff" that is no longer useful or attractive--but also includes clutter related to those annoying things you are tolerating.

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Topical Quote

From the creative mathematician/philosopher:
"Ideas won't keep: something must be done about them."
~~Alfred North Whitehead

Judy Feld, Master Certified Coach (MCC)
Certified Mentor Coach
2003 President, International Coach Federation
judy@coachnet.com www.coachnet.com
972-931-6366 (phone) 972-931-6616 (fax)
