

# Creativity Workshop

## Introduction



5 minutes

Today individuals as well as organizations are being challenged to think more creatively in order to maintain their innovative edge in the global marketplace.

It is essential that people explore what creativity is and how it can be learned and enhanced.



**We have all had years of schooling on how to think logically. And certainly that has provided us with many opportunities and rewards. But have we lost some of our creative edge? Have we forgotten how to think creatively?**

Some of the questions we're going to explore today include:

- What is creativity?
- How can it be learned?
- What are the barriers to creative thinking?
- How can creative thinking enhance teamwork and collaboration?

Contrary to popular belief, creative thinking isn't just a talent some people are born with. It doesn't belong only to the painter, the musician, the dancer, or the actor. Thinking creatively is essential to all of us; it enables us to work more productively and to be more motivated by our work. Like an athletic activity, it can be practiced; you can exercise your mind just the way you exercise your body, building your creative muscle.

## Warm-Up Exercise



Hand out the Creative Thinking Worksheet.



15 minutes



Ask each person to write on this page what he or she thinks creativity is. Tell them they have 2 to 3 minutes.

**What words, phrases, and concepts do you associate with creative thinking? Write your first ideas.**

Before you ask for examples of what people wrote, ask them to raise their hands if they wrote within the confines of the box in the page. Note that the following insights should be humorous, rather than making participants feel like they're being put on the spot.



**Notice that the box you are writing in is not an ordinary square, but oddly positioned on the page. It is not even closed at the top. And yet, most people write in the box.**

Now ask how many of them wrote inside the box, and on a slant to match the line at the top of the box. You will possibly get a lot of hands in the air for this as well.



**The point is that we tend to write within the lines that are given to us. This box doesn't even use the space very well on the page, and yet there is a tendency to have our writing respect its boundaries. Very few people will violate the lines of the box and write right across it. Nor will most people write against the angle as indicated by the drawing.**

So what does this tell us? It certainly doesn't mean that most of you are not creative. What this means is that we tend to accept the boundaries and parameters that other people set up for us. We do our work within those parameters without questioning why they have been drawn in the way they have.

What we'd like to challenge you to think about in this workshop is, *Where are those lines drawn in your life? Are they more arbitrary than they need to be? When can you walk outside the boundaries and redefine them in your own way?*

Now ask the group what they wrote down on the page as their definition of creativity. Acknowledge these comments, and then suggest that there are many definitions for creativity. Show the Definition of Creativity flip-chart page and explain the following:



**People often become intimidated by the idea that creativity is coming up with something brand new, that's never existed before. A more practical and commonly used definition of creativity that you can apply immediately in your work is that, rather than coming up with totally new ideas, creativity is the ability to see old things in new ways. It's putting together ideas that have never been put together before in that fashion.**

## Aspects of Creative Thinking



15  
minutes



**Turn over your Creative Thinking pages. I'm going to give you 2 minutes to do a writing assignment. We will start immediately after I give you your instructions. Ready? All right. On the back of your Creative Thinking page, write down everything you can think of that's round.**

Time the group carefully on your watch. When they have finished, tell them that this was not a test of creativity in any way, but a commonly used exercise that will help to explain the three important aspects of creative thinking.

Ask the group for examples of the round objects they thought of. Encourage them to name objects that they feel no one else in the room wrote down. Compliment the group on the range of round objects they came up with and the uniqueness of their ideas.



Explain that there are three major aspects of creativity\*:

- Fluency
- Flexibility
- Originality



**Fluency** is analogous to the concept of being fluent with a language. It refers to the ability to come up with many ideas quickly and easily. In the exercise you just did, the number of round objects—quantity versus quality—is an example of your fluency.

In the 2 minutes, if you were able to come up with fourteen to sixteen round objects, that's average fluency. Count up your round objects and see how many you were able to write down. Put that number at the top of your page.

**Flexibility** is the second aspect of creativity. It involves being able to jump from one kind of category to another. For example, how many of you wrote down the earth as a round object? Listing the earth is a broad way of thinking of a round object. It is certainly something we could see in a new way when the astronauts photographed our planet from space.

But did you stay in this one category of round objects? For example, once you wrote down the earth, did you also then continue listing other celestial bodies? Did you write down the moon, the sun, other planets? If so, you are limiting yourself to a single frame of reference.

That's what we mean by flexibility—that ability to move from one category to another—a leap so that you don't get stuck in one area.

It's also interesting to see whether you moved from the realm of actual physical objects like planets, balls, donuts, balloons, wheels, or rings to more abstract concepts like the eye of a hurricane, the universe, or infinity.

**Originality** is the last category. In this exercise, originality literally means how unique the round object that you wrote down was. Originality is the most difficult part of creativity to practice and learn. Fluency and flexibility are things you can begin doing right away.

At this point you may acknowledge or give a prize to the person in the room who came up with the most original round object, something no one else thought of.

## Creativity Myths



15 minutes



There are certain unstated beliefs we have that can actually hamper our creativity. What are some creativity "myths" that are commonly held in society?

\*Adapted from Dr. E. Paul Torrance (1966) and Guilford's *Dimensions of Aptitude* (1950).



Ask for—and write on the flip chart—suggestions from the group. These may include creativity myths along the lines of:



- **Creativity cannot be taught. You are either born with it or you're not.**
- **Only very intelligent people are creative.**
- **Creative people tend to be emotional or eccentric.**
- **A “creative” person is creative all the time.**
- **Creativity diminishes with age.**

Encourage the group to take each myth, one by one, and see whether they can “de-bunk” them via group discussion. Encourage them to offer counter-examples by giving a personal experience or an anecdote for each.

## The Creative Style Profile



30 to 45  
minutes

Distribute the Creative Style Profile and tell the participants to individually read the Introduction. Then, as a group, review the instructions on page 1 and answer any questions the participants have.

Tell them they'll have 10 to 15 minutes to complete the thirty-five-question inventory that starts on page 1, and ask them to begin.

When they have finished, have them transfer their ratings to the Scoring Sheet and total each column. Tell them that the column with the highest number represents their dominant style.

Tell participants that you will now explain each of the five styles and that additional information can be found on pages 7 through 14 of their Creative Style Profiles.

As you explain each of the creative styles, ask for a show of hands to see who scored the highest in that category. Participants may raise their hands twice if their two highest scores are identical.



Display the Connector overhead and ask how many scored highest in Connector. Explain that a Connector possesses the following qualities:

- Observes with all senses
- Flexibility and openness
- Spontaneous lateral thinking
- Perceptive orientation



**Connectors** are perceptive-oriented. Their creativity is based on the ability to see relationships between previously unrelated things. This requires a high degree of flexibility and an openness to all possibilities. Connectors' minds function a bit like the random access memory of a computer. They have a large stored memory, or knowledge possessed, which can quickly be brought up in response to a specific prob-

lem. The Connectors' mental databases are large because they are good observers. They take in information from many sources constantly.

People who score highest in Connector are not traditional linear thinkers. When confronted with a problem, they make use of analogies and metaphors to see a situation in a new way. A Connector is often able to see the humor in difficult situations. They are good problem solvers and brainstormers. They can bring fresh approaches to chronic problems.

"An idea is a feat of association," is the way Robert Frost described the Connector's creative process. It functions as a nice explanation of how he might have arrived at his famous metaphor of two roads diverging in a wood.



Display the Dreamer overhead and ask how many scored highest in Dreamer. Explain that a Dreamer possesses the following qualities:

- Free-form thinking
- Non-judgmental
- Non-goal-oriented
- Vivid imagination
- Receptive orientation



*Dreamers*, on the other hand, are receptive-oriented. Their creativity is most dramatically characterized by the breakthrough of ideas from below the level of conscious awareness. Dreamers frequently get impressions, feelings, ideas, and visions as if from nowhere. They have the ability to "see" without the need to understand or organize. They are not looking at the whole or final outcomes. They are non-judgmental, relying heavily on their instincts.

People who score highest in Dreamer are usually not goal-driven, so they can relax and be especially receptive to images and ideas. People who have worked on a problem unsuccessfully for a long time often find solutions and breakthroughs when they forget about the problem and think about something else. Solutions come suddenly and with great clarity while they're in the shower or out jogging. It is in this moment that they are most in touch with their Dreamer's creative intelligence.

"The germ of a composition comes suddenly and unexpectedly—I thought the symphony exactly as you heard it." So said classical composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky.



Display the Innovator overhead and ask how many scored highest in Innovator. Explain that Innovators possess the following qualities:

- Generate and embrace change
- Motivate self and others
- Desire to control the future
- Goal orientation



**Innovators** are goal-oriented. Their creativity springs from a concept of the future and the intense desire to control that future. Innovators frequently operate at the edge of their knowledge and competence, focusing their attention and resources in new areas. They are risk takers because they venture into new areas, but the constant control they have over every step in the process helps them accept the risks. Speculation is ever-present in the Innovator's mind.

People who score highest in Innovator are very entrepreneurial in character, embracing and generating change. Growth and change are driving forces for Innovators. They are constantly open to new opportunities that may come from ideas generated by themselves or others. But ultimately, the Innovator is the one to manage the execution of those ideas. He or she does this by energizing and motivating others. Innovators are magnetic people who take the lead and exert influence. Innovators want to understand what is possible and then to act on this understanding; they see things in final form, as finished products.

There is no better example of an Innovator than Apple Computer founder Steven Jobs, who said, "We designed this computer because we couldn't afford to buy one—on sheer enthusiasm we got \$10,000 in parts on thin air credit—and that's how we started."



Display the Builder overhead and ask how many scored highest in Builder. Explain that a Builder possesses the following qualities:

- Prefers physical, hands-on work
- Experiences rather than intellectualizes an idea
- Is engaged by textures, shapes, colors
- Has a visual orientation



**Builders** are the most visually oriented of the five. Their creativity is expressed in the actual construction and final physical representation of their ideas. The essence of this creative intelligence is the Builder's ability to visualize how materials come together as the work evolves. Builders may not intellectualize new concepts but experience them as they happen. Once an idea is generated, Builders can become very detail-oriented. They are dedicated to making things work as perfectly as possible. Their trial-and-error approach can result in new, creative ways of seeing things.

Builders often picture clearly, in their mind's eyes, the challenges ahead and how they will confront them. They are highly aware of texture, shape, color, space, mass, and weight. These provide them with an abundance of ideas and alternatives. Although they may have a vision of the desired results, they are not limited by that vision. The final outcome of their work is certainly satisfying, but the real pleasure comes from the building process itself.

Sculptor Henry Moore described it this way: "I get the solid shape inside my head—I mentally visualize a complex form—I am in control, almost like God creating something."



Display the Explorer overhead and ask how many scored highest in Explorer. Explain that Explorers possess the following qualities:

- Stimulated by challenge and adventure
- Driving curiosity
- Patient investigation
- Action orientation



**Explorers** are the most action-oriented, usually preferring “doing” to “discussing.” Their creativity emanates from the energy for challenge and adventure. They are driven by curiosity to push beyond existing knowledge to unknown frontiers. Their creative intelligence can be focused, patient, and analytical as they follow experimental trails in the search for new ground. They look for the right questions that they should be asking themselves in the discovery phase of their work. The asking of difficult theoretical questions and the posing of hypothetical solutions lead them to thought processes that avoid traditional, logical thinking.

Explorers are able to free themselves from conventional and established standards. They may retreat from extensive social involvement, choosing instead to work alone or with a few close colleagues. Preoccupation with the pursuit of their tasks gives them little tolerance for people distractions. Their fascination with the exploratory process pushes them to take risks, even when there is a strong possibility of failure. They may often go through long periods of frustration, but when they do succeed, real breakthroughs can be the result.

Artist/inventor Leonardo da Vinci put it tellingly: “I roamed the countryside searching for answers to things I did not understand—why shells existed on mountain tops—why a bird sustains itself in the air.”

Often, your truest creative ability may express itself in a combination.

Now take your two highest scores and read the appropriate description of this combination on pages 17 through 21 of your Creative Style Profile.

## Discovering Creative Strengths Exercise



10 to 20  
minutes



Ask the group to break themselves into pairs. Distribute a copy of the Discovering Creative Strengths handout to each participant. Have one member of the pair ask the other each of the seven probing questions from the handout. After 10 minutes, have them switch roles.

### Probing Questions

1. In which of the creative styles did you have your highest score? What was your second highest? Did you have a tie for the top style?
2. What strengths did you discover that you are presently using on your job?

3. What strengths do you possess that you are not able to use in your current job?  
How might you use these strengths more?
4. What do your results on the Creative Style Profile tell you about career goals you should be setting for yourself?
5. How might your creative style cause career barriers for you?
6. How does your creative style affect the people you work with?
7. What behaviors from the Creative Style Profile would you like to be doing more of? Pick three and discuss how you can start doing them now.

If the participants are from supervisory/managerial areas, you may wish to add the following exercise on coaching.

### Coaching Exercise



5 to 10  
minutes



Still in pairs, ask them to discuss the following question:

- What conflicts can occur when you and your employees have different styles?  
How might this impact their careers?

### Barriers to Creativity



5 to 10  
minutes



**Often, the environment or culture you work in isn't conducive to the free flow of creativity. Inflexible or overly traditional mindsets can often stand in the way of your comfort level in terms of trying to offer new ideas.**

Ask participants to imagine a highly creative working environment. What would that workplace look like?

Examples:

- People are encouraged to experiment with new ideas and new ways of doing things.
- A sense of humor and playfulness are part of the culture.
- People are rewarded for gaining new knowledge or promoting cutting-edge ideas.
- Discussing unpopular or unconventional ideas is supported.
- Frequent communication and the exchange of ideas between work groups or departments are encouraged.
- Mistakes are discussed and learned from, not punished.
- People get to experience a sense of completion in their work. They see how their work is part of the whole.



- It is possible to find quiet time or alone time at work.
- People generally feel more collaborative than competitive.



**In organizations in which these examples are lacking, attitudes can express themselves in typical statements one might hear in meetings that, for all intents and purposes, function as “Idea Stoppers.” They are the proverbial “wet blanket” that’s thrown onto any group enthusiasm that might be building. We’ve all heard them.**



Ask for suggestions—and add to the flip chart—suggestions from the group. These may include “Idea Stoppers” along the lines of:

- Let’s shelve it for right now.
- We tried that before.
- It won’t work here.
- Our business is different.
- We did all right without it.
- It’s too radical a change.
- Management won’t like it.
- Where did you dig up that idea?
- It’s too risky.
- Let’s be sensible.



### Questions to Discuss

- What is it within your power to do, as an individual, to make the work environment more conducive to creativity?
- What might you be doing that actually hampers the creative energy of your colleagues?

If working with a group of managers, discuss the following questions:

- What specific things can you do to make the environment more conducive to creativity for your team?
- How will these changes impact your employees’ productivity? How will they impact their careers?

## Team Styles Exercise



30 minutes



This optional exercise is intended for intact work groups or teams. It is designed to help them discover how they can increase their creative productivity and decrease the conflicts and problems that can develop when people with different styles and approaches work together.



So far you have explored your own creative strengths and how you can develop and nurture them in your professional life. You have also explored the concept that creative thinking flourishes in an environment that supports it.

Now we are going to consider how all this fits together as you work in teams. You have probably heard the expression that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This is certainly true of work groups. In the following exercise you are going to look at how to get the most out of team work by bringing out the most of each individual member's creative strengths.



List the five creative styles on a flip chart.

Ask each participant in turn to say what his or her style is. (*Note:* In rare cases, individuals will have two identical high scores. If this is the case, ask them to pick the one with which they most strongly identify.) Chart the team's styles on the flip chart so that the team can see which styles are represented.



Discuss the results with the group. It is important to create an atmosphere in which people feel comfortable talking about the positive and potentially negative aspects of each style. This is an important and serious discussion, but it will be much more effective and honest if it is facilitated with a lively sense of humor.

### Questions for Discussion

- There are upsides and downsides to teams or workgroups that are dominated by one or two creative styles. What pitfalls might your group encounter if you are too similar in style? What benefits might there be? How can you compensate for missing perspectives?
- Conversely, what are the upsides and downsides of a group comprised of many different styles? How can you ensure that everyone is equally heard?

After this general discussion, move on to discuss each style more specifically.

### Innovator

(*Clue:* Management groups may score the highest in **Innovator**, as the qualities of this style are frequently considered to be the preferred skills needed for strong leadership. This can lead to an interesting discussion as to what it really takes to be a productive leader in a specific organization.)



Consider the following questions:

- What are the unique strengths that Innovators bring to team work?
- What is the downside of having a team that is predominantly made up of Innovators?
- What are some Innovator behaviors that can drive others a bit crazy?

Some examples might include:

- Taking charge and making decisions without getting everyone's input.
- Moving too quickly and missing an important point.
- Lack of patience.

Ask whether any of the Innovators in the group agree that they are guilty of some of these behaviors on occasion. How might they compensate for these behaviors? What can other team members do when these behaviors arise?

## Connector

(*Clue:* Product management or marketing groups may score the highest in Connector, as the qualities of this style are frequently helpful in seeing things from many different perspectives.)



**Consider the following questions:**

- **What are the unique strengths that Connectors bring to team work?**
- **What is the downside of having a team that is predominantly made up of Connectors?**
- **What are some Connector behaviors that can drive others a bit crazy?**

Some examples might include:

- Taking the conversation off on a tangent.
- Seeing things other don't and not explaining how the connection was made.
- Not moving quickly enough.

Ask whether any of the Connectors in the group agree that they are guilty of some of these behaviors on occasion. How might they compensate for these behaviors? What can other team members do when these behaviors arise?

## Dreamers

(*Clue:* This is the least frequently seen creative style. People who score highest in this style often feel that their thoughts and insights are ignored or discarded.)



**Consider the following questions:**

- **What are the unique strengths that Dreamers bring to team work?**
- **Given that this is the least frequent style, what are the implications of having no Dreamers on a team?**
- **What are some Dreamer behaviors that can drive others a bit crazy?**

Some examples might be:

- Coming up with impractical or unrealistic ideas.
- Too trusting. Not questioning or cynical.
- All vision and no clear action plan.
- Not results-oriented.

Ask whether any of the Dreamers in the group agree that they are guilty of some of these behaviors on occasion. How might they compensate for these behaviors? What can other team members do when these behaviors arise?

## Builders

(*Clue:* Engineering and technical groups may score the highest in Builder, as the qualities of this style are frequently considered to be the preferred skills needed for detailed focus.)



**Consider the following questions:**

- **What are the unique strengths that Builders bring to team work?**
- **What is the downside of having a team that is predominantly made up of Builders?**
- **What are some Builder behaviors that can drive others a bit crazy?**

Look for these types of examples:

- Focusing on details and losing the big picture.
- Not communicating what you are doing to others.
- Wasting too much time on the small stuff

Ask whether any of the Builders in the group agree that they are guilty of some of these behaviors on occasion. How might they compensate for these behaviors? What can other team members do when these behaviors arise?

## Explorer

(*Clue:* Research and Development groups may score the highest in Explorer, as the qualities of this style are frequently considered to be the preferred skills needed for coming up with new ideas.)



**Consider the following questions:**

- **What are the unique strengths that Explorers bring to team work?**
- **What is the downside of having a team that is predominantly made up of Explorers?**
- **What are some Explorer behaviors that can drive others a bit crazy?**

People may have examples like these:

- Bored by business-as-usual issues.
- Risk takers.
- A preference for working alone.

Ask whether any of the Explorers in the group agree that they are guilty of some of these behaviors on occasion. How might they compensate for these behaviors? What can other team members do when these behaviors arise?

## Summary

Summarize this discussion by pointing out the following:



**All teams, no matter what their function, profit by a diversity of creative styles. If one style dominates, this limits the breadth of discussion and closes off opportunities.**

**Existing teams are strengthened by understanding their creative style composition and looking for outside input from styles that are missing.**

**Managers can make their project teams more productive by considering the individual creative styles of their people before organizing teams. Understanding how people work best is also an important key to developing the careers of individuals.**

## Creative Teamwork Exercise



20 to 30  
minutes



Give the group a problem, real or hypothetical, that they can work on solving together. Encourage them to use all their collective creative skills. You may wish to select a problem that your organization is currently dealing with or select one that would be fun to tackle, such as the following:

- Keeping talented people engaged by their work
- Not enough space for support staff
- Providing more career development opportunities
- Employees not up-to-speed on new technology
- Miscommunication between departments
- No childcare
- Not enough team cooperation

Describe the brainstorming process as follows, listing the points on a flip chart. Some examples are given in parentheses.



- State the problem as you see it. (Traffic is terrible; it takes people much longer to get to work than it used to.) This provides problem awareness.
- Restate the problem from another point of view. (People are getting to work late.) This helps further define the problem.

- Restate the problem yet again. (Productivity is down because people are coming to work tired and stressed.) This helps widen perspective.
- Make a list of questions that address the problem. Look for the right questions, not the right answers. Where do they lead you? (Maybe the traffic problem isn't within your power to solve, but the problem as you have restated it can be addressed.)
- Restate the problem, given what these questions have taught you.
- Build a list of ways to address the problem. Don't look for THE solution. Look for options, possibilities, and alternatives.
- Select at least five good ideas.
- Be sure that you have considered the perspective of all five creative styles.
- Reach a consensus on your two best solutions.
- Present your ideas.



Ask the team how they can continue using this process back at work. Challenge them to develop a consciousness about thinking and working creatively together.



**Now that you know not only that you *are* creative, but *how* you are creative, it's time to get started bringing your ideas to life. Here are some creative tips to guide you.**

## Creativity Tips



5 to 10  
minutes



- Don't share your ideas too quickly or easily with others. A new idea may be too delicate to take criticism.
- Let your idea grow slowly—don't force it into a time schedule. Let it develop in its own way.
- Respect your ideas. If they are worthy, they will prove it to you. If they are lacking, they will die on their own.
- As the idea grows, find only supportive people to talk with about your idea so you don't get discouraged prematurely. Once you are confident and ready to go forward, you can get feedback from others.



Ask the group for creative tips.



**Keep in mind that ideas, the product of creative thinking, are fragile. They can be destroyed, crushed, distorted, and abandoned. And all this can happen before you know whether the idea was a good one or whether it would have worked.**

**So how can you nurture and protect your ideas until they are developed strong enough to stand on their own?**

Close by asking each participant to volunteer to share one thing he or she plans to do to utilize a creative strength or to build a new one.