Management & Consulting

WHY IS CREATIVITY SO DIFFICULT?

It's no secret – creativity is tricky.

You can spend hours looking for inspiration, days waiting for that Eureka moment, moving things around on screen, staring at blank pieces of paper, jotting down half-formed ideas, all to absolutely no avail. Sometimes coming up with just *one* creative idea can feel impossible.

You feel this way because creativity is a process, a skill that has to be learned and honed. It's not a natural, god-given right, but rather one that requires time and dedication.

Whether you're a marketer, designer, entrepreneur or anything in between, creative thinking is a valuable skill to posses. It can help us find unique, tailored solutions to problems and create memorable and effective communications.

Throughout this course we'll break down the ins and outs of creativity, show you how you can come up with more creative ideas, a unique design vision, and how you can transform those ideas and vision into striking and unique designs and communications. In seven short lessons we'll help you overcome the difficulties of beginning your creative journey.

So *why* is creativity so difficult?

There are three major reasons why you might find yourself creatively blocked or having a hard time:

You overthink it

We tend to put an unfair amount of pressure on ourselves. We get a vague idea of how we would like a design to look and get frustrated when we can't capture that on screen. This usually results in hundreds of scrapped ideas, deleted attempts and abandoned projects.

You get into a rut

Getting into a creative rut is a bit like going to a restaurant and ordering the exact same dish every time. Because hey, that one dish is good and you don't want to risk being disappointed by ordering something new.

When we create things, once we learn one technique or style that is tried and tested, we can tend to use and abuse it, never straying from that one effective technique. Coming up with new ideas and techniques can feel impossible and risky.

You don't know where or how to start

Have you ever sat down, thought about all the things you have to do and not done any of them. It can be overwhelming to start a new project; where do you even begin?

Does any of this sound familiar?

If you have ever tried to produce creative works, chances are that one, two, or all three of those roadblocks have happened to you at some point. Creativity is hard, it's fickle and tricky to get a grasp on if you don't have the right tools and mindset.

So, that's where we come in to help.

LET'S STEP BACK: WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

During a 2006 TED Talk Sir Ken Robinson defined creativity as "the process of having original ideas that have value."

This definition breaks down creativity to its two most basic principles:

1. *Generating* ideas
2. *Assessing* the value of those ideas.

Given these two principles of creativity, what mindset is needed to help achieve high level creative output?

INSPIRATION VS. PERSPIRATION

Edison once said that "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration" and scientifically speaking, he wasn't far off with that prognosis.

As it turns out, we all have two basic motivational systems, one is a "doing" system and one is a "thinking" system and we tend to just be able to use one of these systems at a time.

So, when we're brainstorming, ideating, and spitballing ideas around, we are using the "thinking system", this is called *diverging.*Likewise, when we are knuckling down and trying to evaluate and apply those ideas, we're instead using that "doing system" in a process called *converging.*

So, to master both of these mindsets, we need to separate the idea generation process from the idea evaluation process.

Jumping back and forth between ideation and evaluation requires our brains to switch between that divergent and convergent thinking, making the process more tiring, time intensive and trickier. So, by separating these two processes, we can reduce this back and forth and increase our quantity and quality of creative output.

Later on in this course we'll be discussing ways that you can generate ideas, and then how you can evaluate and transform them into a final product.

BECOME A GOAL DIGGER

Having a strong system of goals often means that you know what you want. Having a clear mental image of the final product and the steps that need to be taken to achieve that end result is instrumental for starting the creative process.

The key to getting started is figuring out what you want. Having a clear mental image of your destination/final product and the steps that need to be taken is instrumental for starting the creative process.

And how do we do this? By setting ourselves goals.

Setting realistic, achievable, and encouraging goals can not only help the efficiency of your working process, but it can also help break down your project into more manageable steps.

The biggest error people make when setting goals around creativity is setting them around the final product, not the process.

"I want to have created four posters for my event by next week" is an example of a product-based goal. It's a little vague, it puts the pressure on the time limit, and is ultimately more daunting than it is inspiring.

Instead, break things down into sizeable process-based goals. These could range from "I want to come up with 100 ideas/sketches by the end of the day" to "I want to work on my poster project for a minimum of four hours a day" or "I want to get constructive feedback from three people".

See how these goals are much more achievable and less daunting? They act as actionable stepping stones towards the final product, making them much easier and encouraging to take on.

CHECK YOUR EXCUSES AT THE DOOR

Another important mindset to have is one devoid of excuses. There will always be an excuse for why you haven't gotten started yet, why you shouldn't start yet, or why you can't create the things you want to create.

"I don't have the right environment", "I don't have the right skills", "I need more experience to create better ideas".

Creativity is a process, it's a skill that can be learned and refined by anyone.

All that you require to get started is the motivation to put *something* down on paper. A half formed idea, a rough sketch, a list of bullet points. Set aside time to be creative just as you would set time aside time to work on anything else, and encourage yourself to put anything down on paper, whether it's usable or not.

DAILY TASK

- Break down your project and set up a series of manageable and doable goals. Try to keep them process-based, concise and achievable in a short period of time (i.e. within a day, with an hour, etc.)