

Creative thinking and research skills essay examples

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Traditional wisdom used to hold that creative thinking and innovative thinking is an inborn, innate talent; individuals are either born with the gift for creative thought or they are not. However, research is proving more and more that while some people may be born with more innate talent, there is no reason why creative thinking and problem solving cannot be taught throughout childhood and into adulthood. The world is different than it used to be; today, in the industrialized world, all the information an individual could possibly need is available at the click of a button. This so-called "Information Age" has decreased the need for individuals capable of rote memorization and increased the need for individuals capable of gathering, assessing, synthesizing, drawing conclusions, and extrapolating from the vast amount of data available.

It is difficult to raise an artist in an environment where creative thinking is frowned upon, simply because art requires that the individual "color outside the lines," as the old adage goes. In addition, it is difficult for an artist-- or any type of creative thinker-- to succeed in an environment where mistakes and errors are harshly punished, because creativity is born through experimentation and mistake-making.

There is a misconception that "creativity" must be interchangeable with "originality," but this is not the case. While creativity can be originality, it can also be the process of moulding and changing an existing concept in a new and different way. While this type of creativity does incorporate originality, it is not what most people think of when they hear the term "original content."

There is an intangible moment during the creative process that cannot be

forced. Sternberg (2006) calls this the “ creative event.” This is the moment when the artist, designer, scientist, or other creative individual hits upon an idea that is both feasible and creative. There is no way, Sternberg (2006) says, to ensure that there is an organic “ creative event” during the design process, so the designer or creative individual must do everything possible to facilitate this event during the design process.

When working in design, many people begin by assuming that the only type of thinking necessary to being successful is creative thinking; however, convergent and divergent thinking are meant to be used by the human brain in tandem, not in competition with each other.

Divergence

Design itself is dependent upon the creativity of the artist. Without a good understanding of his or her creative talents and a well-developed artistic style, even the most adept salesperson will have difficulty securing a bid on a design project. Designers and artists with the potential to be successful are individuals who have spent time developing and honing their artistic and creative talents, and have the self-awareness to understand the niche that their type of design and style fits into most closely. This does not mean that artists or designers should find a niche and never expand; however, it does mean that when an artist or designer takes it upon him- or herself to expand outside of his or her niche, he or she must work hard to ensure that his or her work is up to par.

It is common for people to draw distinctions between the artist and the scientist, or between the poet and the mathematician, the artist and the engineer; however, in reality, these occupations are fundamentally,

philosophically very similar. An engineer without the ability for creative thought would be a very poor engineer indeed.

Creative thought begins with conceptualization; the individual sits and imagines the problem or project, with no limits in mind. This is commonly called brainstorming, and it can be done individually or with a client, or other artist. During this phase of the creative process, it is important to avoid getting too attached to any specific idea or thought, because it could hamper the development of other, potentially better ideas. Brainstorming sessions should never be limited; instead, they should go on as long as they are needed, with as many different individuals involved as is helpful to the artist. The artist may also do traditional research, looking at historical examples of how people have solved similar problems (Jirousek, 1995).

After the artist goes through the divergent process of brainstorming solutions to the project or various creative avenues to pursue, he or she must analyze the feasibility of each option. Each idea must be evaluated for general feasibility-- economic feasibility is one of the main limiting factors for many projects. However, time and resource limitations may also change the creative avenue a designer chooses to explore. Lastly, an idea may be a good one independently, but it may not fit with the vision the client has, or with the philosophical undercurrent of the project. Evaluating every brainstormed idea with these criteria in mind can be a difficult process; if none of the ideas are feasible or the client dislikes the feasible ideas, the designer may need to start the process over again. This part of the design process can be very frustrating and time-consuming.

Once the plan for the project is complete, the designer should begin to

execute the project. It is at this point in the process where the difference between artistic style and creative voice come into play. An artist should be able to execute a project in a variety of different media or artistic styles, while still keeping his or her special signature, or creative voice, intact. While this sounds simple, it takes years of experience and practice to truly begin to separate style from voice, and to express creative voice effectively through styles that the designer may or may not prefer. This is, however, part of the reality of working as an artist in the commercial world; one's artistic style may have to be put by the wayside for certain projects.

Convergence

In his famous piece *The Creative Act*, Marcel Duchamp wrote: "What I have in mind is that art may be bad, good or indifferent, but, whatever adjective is used, we must call it art, and bad art is still art in the same way that a bad emotion is still an emotion" (Duchamp, 1957). However, bad art and bad design do not sell. Once an artist has established him or herself as a good artist, he or she must then take the next steps to establish him or herself as a good businessperson.

A design project is generally priced by time or by output. A designer may choose to charge the client based on the finished project, or, if the project (or client) seems to be time-consuming, the designer may choose to charge the client by the time spent on the project (Jirousek, 1995).

There are obvious costs involved in any project a designer chooses to take on. These costs often include supplies or even travel, if travel is necessary for a project. Any designer should be transparent and upfront about what he or she has considered when he or she wrote up the estimate; most sources

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say that a client will not necessarily turn down a higher offer (or accept a lower one) without weighing the value they are getting for their money with each offer (Jirousek, 1995).

In addition to these types of costs, the designer should also consider how much time he or she is likely to spend on a project. If it is a relatively straightforward project in a medium or software program that the designer knows well, the designer should feel confident in suggesting a tighter timeline. If the designer has reservations about any aspect of the project, he or she should be certain to give him or herself enough time to complete the project comfortably. It is difficult for a designer to do his or her best work when under intense amounts of stress; he or she should take this into account when working with the client to develop a timeline for a specific project.

There are also hidden time costs in every project. Administrative work is one aspect of design projects that many designers overlook because they are so caught up in the execution of the project itself; however, the myriad little tasks that come with having a project and working on a deadline can wreak havoc on a designer and cause unnecessary, unneeded stress.

The last thing a designer should consider is the client him or herself. Some clients allow the designer free reign, trusting the designer to do the project to the best of his or her ability. However, other clients are much more hands-on, and much more wishy-washy; some clients will be satisfied with the first iteration of a project, while other clients will ask for countless revisions.

Revisions after the project is complete cannot be foreseen, but it is best to discuss with a client beforehand a specific policy on revisions. These

revisions may seriously eat into a designer's time, making them incapable of taking on other projects. Having a specific policy regarding revisions can help to make the process of revision smoother for both client and designer. When a designer faces a client with a different aesthetic style, it is important for the designer to remember that the client is, essentially, a customer. It is unwise to become too married to a specific artistic style; instead, the designer should find a way to compromise with the customer, create a finished product that the customer is happy with, and also express his or her unique voice through this finished product. This can be difficult, of course, but solving problems like these should be welcome and interesting endeavours.

The Intersection of Convergence and Divergence

Convergent thinking and divergent thinking are two very different approaches to life and problem solving. To be successful as a designer, an individual needs to be proficient with both the "left-side" brain and the "right-side" brain; the designer must be proficient at encouraging his or her own creative process, but he or she must also be capable of dealing with logistics and interpersonal issues.

Many people expect creativity to exist in a vacuum, but creative thinking is work; often, creative thinking is hard work. Everyone is creative, albeit in different ways and at different levels, but everyone has the ability to cultivate their own "creative event." The true test comes when the individual must take the idea that he or she has created and create something real with it.

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