

THE LATENT PSYCHE CONCEPT

A Formula for Originating Ideas

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ORIGINATING IDEAS:

Ideas are the backbone of America. American ingenuity, creativity and inventiveness are the threads of life that continue to weave new products, new concepts and better ways of doing almost everything. Ideas are what this country is all about. From the idea of an individual's freedom guaranteed by a constitution to the idea of a "better mouse trap," Americans propagate creativity. Problems arise, not from entertaining new concepts, but from not shedding old ones.

Nothing is more frustrating to a writer, scientist, engineer, sales agent or anyone under threat of a deadline, than to have to create ideas. Everyday minute-by-minute ideas are seldom earth-shaking innovations. Most fall into the realm of attention-getting sales letters, inspirational messages to subordinates and other routine problem solving matters. Nonetheless, for those charged with bottom line responsibility (or those aspiring to be so charged) having to produce new concepts and unique tactics can be Twinkie-consuming pressure. Knowing how to enhance and stimulate idea production is indispensable to success and can go a long way in reducing stress.

Writers, sales agents, crafts/trades persons, business leaders must produce fresh ideas on an on-going basis. Understanding how those new concepts are formed - the actual creative process - is paramount to increasing idea production.

Much has been written about people who are creative - those who produce ideas - but little about how they actually arrive at new concepts, theories or a different way of viewing old notions. The term, creativity, is easily defined, however, a technique for achieving this highly acclaimed attribute is not readily found.

Idea production, like any other manufacturing process, is subject to and dependent upon an identifiable pattern. It makes little difference whether the creator is writing a book, seeking a solution to a production line problem or looking to increase sales, the process of idea production is the same.

DEFINITIONS:

IDEA: n A mental image, concept, or notion not previously envisioned.

CREATIVITY: n (1875) 1: the quality of being creative 2: the ability to create. Also: The ability to make or otherwise bring into existence something new, whether a new solution to a problem, a new method or device, or a new artistic object or form.

HISTORICAL NOTES:

"The creative process is the process of change, of development, of evolution, in the organization of subjective life." Studies have shown that elevated intelligence, IQ above 120, does not appear to have much affect upon creativity. In other words, being highly intelligent does not enhance creativity. There has never been a reliable test to determine one's creativeness anymore than an examination can measure intuition.

Noted writer and poet, Stephen Spender, observed that fellow writer, Walter de la Mare, "must smoke while he is writing" and another of his contemporaries "drinks endless cups of tea when he writes."

Spender, himself, admits, "coffee is my addiction, besides smoking a great deal, which I hardly ever do except when writing." He believes these traits to be the cement for his, and his fellow writer's, concentration. Perhaps, but it is more likely a form of distraction - a temporary escape into the subconscious.

Among the first to recognize idea producing exercises was the learned Italian economist and sociologist, Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923). As an aside to his work, *Mind & Society*, Pareto determined there were only two types of people: Speculator and the Rentier. Translating from French; Speculator is one who is speculative, as in pre-occupied with possibilities of new combinations. The English translation for Rentier is stockholder or one who is routine and conserving - those whom the Speculator manipulates. Though Pareto recognized creativeness, it was James Webb Young, an advertising executive with J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency, who defined the idea-making process.

The basic formula is simple to grasp and most "speculator" type persons already, unwittingly, utilize most of the practices. However, because many idea producers do not understand the process or have never given much thought to their successes they sometimes have difficulty in consistently coming up with new ideas on demand.

THE LATENT PSYCHE CONCEPT

The formula for creativity production is comprised of five distinct and separate steps, the Latent Psyche Concept. Latent, because it deals with the ideas and thoughts hidden away in the back of the mind. Psyche, for the involvement of the entire mind including the memory section, the intellect and the subconscious. Concept, because this word best defines the goal of seeking an idea, abstract notion or new outlook.

1) IDENTIFICATION: Identifying the problem and establishing goals. What do I wish to accomplish? Is it a script I want to write or is the hero of the story in a situation I can't get him out of? Is the production line slow because of worker inefficiency? Or are the workers inefficient because of mechanical aberrations in the line? Maybe the problem is simpler, such as: why don't I like a particular sales slogan?

When identifying the predicament it is important not to try to pursue detailed solutions to complex problems, i.e., if the problem is complex, seek ideas to one portion of the obstacle at a time. It is not necessary to work each section all the way through the Latent Psyche Concept before beginning the next section. The subconscious can juggle many tasks at once. What is important is to define the goals by identifying each problem. If the task is complex a visual list - something that can be periodically reviewed - helps keep the goals in focus and acts as a stimulant for the mind.

2) INFORMATION: The collecting of raw materials. Whether it is new research or data found in your own storehouse of general wisdom, knowledge is essential. Care must be taken not to clutter the mind with useless data and trivia such as daily social obligations. Keeping a calendar and day sheet of things to do and to log all appointments and responsibilities will free the mind for creativity.

3) MELDING: Digesting, sorting and collating - working over - INFORMATION in the mind. In other words, actively trying to come up with an idea. The solution might be readily available and on the forefront of conscious thoughts. Brainstorming or think-tank sessions are forms of Melding.

Oft-times, during this stage, the realization that not enough INFORMATION is available and a return to that phase is necessary. Trying to cross the river before the bridge is in place is convoluted and non-productive.

4) LATENT PSYCHE: This is the crux of the concept. Mountains of Information can be accumulated and Melded with any number of problems, but without this stage new ideas are hard to come-by. During this interval the subconscious portion of the mind forces Identification to consort, fraternize and - Meld - with Information. Uncomplicated by conscious thoughts, and all its taboos and negatives, the Latent Psyche "mixing-it-up" stage is a playground for creativity.

*Call It Magic, Pavlovian Action, Supernatural,
God's Intervention Or Whatever;
The Latent Psyche Concept Works.*

The amount of time the subconscious requires to develop an idea or view the problem from a different perspective is indeterminate. Some problems can be solved in seconds, while others might take overnight or even weeks. Writers and advertising executives among others who work with words have the unique problem of creating new text and ideas with almost every word. With libraries stuffed full of Information and thirteen million words in the dictionary (Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary) the Latent Psyche stage is quite complex. Old practitioners of this process used to say "sleep on it" as a way of allowing the subconscious to act. This could be good advice for some, but to those on deadline there might not be enough sleep-time to beat the press, a competitor or sales quota.

Therefore, a new method was needed to permit the subconscious - the Latent Psyche - to come up with a creation. The trick is to have a switch or instantly available gimmick that would turn on the Latent Psyche mode almost at will. It has to be something that creates a concentration level high enough to block out all conscious thought of the project at hand. Of course, it has to be simple enough that its involvement didn't disrupt the project. Driving across town to the gym for a work-out would hardly be conducive to time well managed. Hours needed for "sleeping on it" or for delving into a hobby that forces a stoppage when things are just getting fun is also not favorable to creativity.

Some possibilities immediately come to mind: focused, yet mindless, subconscious-stroking activities might include playing simple video games, especially if they can be accessed without leaving your keyboard. However, complicated video games might require memory space and analogy time which will crowd the mind with useless Information.

Smoking or drinking endless cups of coffee, as noted by the aforementioned poet Stephen Spender, can surely produce results, but the cost in personal health terms might be self-defeating. Spender's diversions to light a cigarette, or fill his coffee cup is in reality a work stoppage which allows his subconscious to mull over the current problem, a la, Latent Psyche Concept.

The card game, solitaire, is an excellent method for luring the mind into relaxed mode. There is no commitment to finish the game, save it or move on to the next level such as what other contests or engineered distractions might demand.

*A Deck Of Cards Kept On The Production Desk
Can Be Used Anytime A Block Appears
Or A Fresh Approach Is Needed.*

Solitaire is not retentive inasmuch as the memory portion of the mind isn't compromised. Other diversions, such as hobbies, require thought process and memory action that might interfere with the Latent Psyche process of the current problem. In addition, when things aren't going well with a hobby, the negative mind-set can become counter-productive. Another alternative is to leave a radio on - volume very low. Focusing on a favorite song during stage four can sometimes serve as a mental picnic.

5) CREATION: The birth of the idea. The "Eureka" moment. The discovery or solution to the problem can be a single word, the key to a character's dilemma or the resolution to a complex business proposal. It can also be a fleeting instant such as when the suddenly crystal clear answer, amid a mind spinning with Melded Information, just as suddenly re-Melds. The light bulb turned on to shine upon the creation can be turned off in an instant. Therefore, it is imperative that the idea or solutions are written down or somehow saved immediately. Even saying the revelation out loud can, in a manner of speaking, save it to memory. This latter tactic is most useful should the idea come in the middle of the night or while occupied with other consuming tasks such as driving an automobile. The human mind, while it is juggling the Information, might fail to shut down upon the discovery. The idea producing machinery, once set in motion, will continue to collate thereby losing the "Eureka" innovation. This is why it is important to be at the keyboard when the Creation is born and not at the gym or hobby room. It is important to deal with (write-down or save to memory) all ideas as they emerge. The first new concept might not be the best, but it, in conjunction with later innovations, might foster the winning idea.

6) REVERBERATION: Though not a step, per se, Reverberation to confirm the pragmatic aspect of the Creation is necessary. Just because an idea was produced doesn't necessarily mean that it is the correct or best idea to solve the identified problem. An idea has been created and the urge to celebrate by making use of the Creation is very strong. However, good business practice mandates bouncing the new thought around. The creative process of the Latent Psyche Concept is capable of producing many ideas - some better than others. It is during this stage that the good ideas are sorted out from the not-so-good ones.

IDEAS BEGET IDEAS: Many times, an idea seeker will create a creation only to later have to acknowledge, if to no one other than himself, "I should have written/done it this way." Reverberating, or bouncing the creation off someone else or just off a mirror saves a lot of time and potential embarrassment. Saying the new work out loud acts as a check and balance by letting the brain hear the concept from a different perspective. Looking at the idea from this oblique angle gives time to make observations such as asking, "is this the best idea. What if..." which leads to confirmation or back to any of the other phases - Information, Melding, Latent Psyche.

THEORY & PRACTICE: Many creative people believe that ideas are the result of association - the connecting of one piece of information with another. Ideas formed by stringing together visual or mental stimuli still utilize the Latent Psyche Concept. These stimuli are the Information that Melds with Identification and though an idea might come quickly, it still is created in the mind - Latent Psyche.

TIME PROVEN PRACTICES AND OBSERVATIONS THAT STIMULATE IDEA PRODUCTION:

- Join organizations, groups or clubs (Kiwanis, Lions, other volunteer) that are not of your circle of friends and acquaintances. Interaction with people of diverse backgrounds inspires creativity;
- Attend political meetings counter to your beliefs - not to argue your views, but to try to understand theirs from their perspective;
- Ideas are gleaned by listening to others;
- Resist tradition - color outside the lines.

IF THE IDEA JUST WON'T COME: START OVER.

- Acknowledge the goal by writing it down (Identification);

- Do more research or restudy the background material on hand (Information);
- Try looking at the problem from a different angle or brainstorming with others (Melding);
- Take a break or begin work on a different task - even one that is totally unrelated such as writing a letter to the newspaper or a friend - or pull out the deck of cards (Latent Psyche).

Practitioners of the Latent Psyche Concept sometimes experience a fast-forwarding or skipping steps. But, study will show that in reality the subconscious had automatically processed the supposedly missed steps. For many, getting started - putting down the first words, machining the first part or turning the initial screw - is sometimes the hardest part. Therefore, it might help to begin with familiar portions and let the Latent Psyche work on the beginning. Now, let's see, what's a good title for this treatise...red three on a black four....

*Little people talk about people;
regular people talk about things;
creative people talk about ideas.*

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