

Ideas come through you, not from you

Millions of them are waiting for you,
“out there”

If, in your work or personal life, you ever need to call on your creative powers to solve a problem or to deal with a new situation, you might benefit by a fresh perspective on creativity. Consider the notion that ideas come *through* you, not from you.

Now, that is radically different from the belief held by most people that an idea is “his” or “hers,” or that sometimes a person “just can’t come up with any ideas at all!”

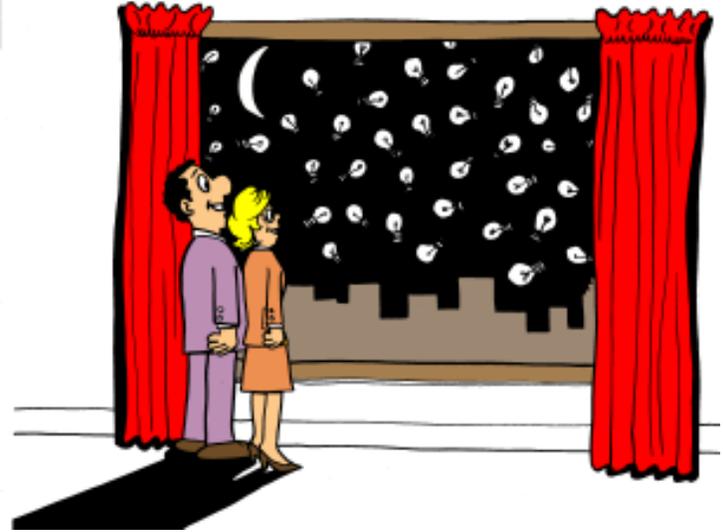
The supply of great ideas is *inexhaustible*. This does not eliminate the need to struggle for answers, but it does allow you to carry on the fight knowing that you will eventually emerge victorious—that the answer you seek does indeed exist.

One person who was known to accept this view, and who also happened to be internationally famous for his creative talent before he died in a plane crash, was singer-actor John Denver.

In an interview, Denver was asked if he was ever tempted to tinker with any of his older songs. “No,” he said. “The songs don’t belong to me. I don’t feel ownership of them. There’s a pool of universal truth out there, and some of it happened to come through John Denver!”

Denver went on to explain how, after a long, futile struggle to complete the song *Calypso*, he decided to go skiing. On the slopes, the verses suddenly came to him.

“Man, I was tearing down the mountain in that jeep, and over to my house so I could get that



down on paper... I love it, whoever wrote that song. It’s one of my favorites. Thrills me... I take a lot of pride in that song, but I didn’t do it. It was given to me.”

By working toward an idea, a person becomes dominated by it and, in turn, the idea uses that person.

We might say that the idea of the electric light “used” Edison, the idea of flying the Atlantic “used” Lindbergh, and the idea of building a hospital in Africa “used” Schweitzer.

So the next time you are in the throes of a creative struggle, it may be helpful to remember that there are millions upon millions of great ideas “out there,” somewhere, and that you are simply helping one of those ideas become a reality *through* you!

Here’s what you can do: *Think of the creative process as a broad, powerful river. When you encounter a problem you want to solve, one that seems intriguing and exciting to you, jump in and start swimming. The river will carry you along at a much greater speed than you could ever muster by yourself.*



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“I’ll do it!”

Drop “try” from your vocabulary

“Can you have that project report back to me by Wednesday?” the manager asked.

“Well, I’ll try,” the supervisor responded.

But come Tuesday afternoon, the supervisor, visibly nervous, came to the manager empty handed.

“I’ve tried. I really have. But it can’t be done. I just won’t get that report to you tomorrow. I’ll try to finish by Friday.”

“You’ll try?”

“I sure will.”

“But you already tried. Why would another try make any difference?”

“Well, I uh, ...”

“That’s okay. I’ll show you what I mean. Try to pick up that telephone receiver.”

The supervisor grabbed it.

“No, I didn’t tell you to pick it up, I said *try* to pick it up.”

Confused, the supervisor placed his hand on the receiver again and started to lift it, and then stopped, thoroughly puzzled.

“You see,” the manager explained, “there’s just no such thing as *try*. You can either pick it up, or not pick it up. But you can’t *try*. It’s the same with that report. You can complete it, or not complete it, but trying won’t help at all.”



The supervisor thought for a moment, then shook his head in agreement. “Okay, I’ll do it,” he said, and left the office.

On Wednesday afternoon the project report was on the manager’s desk.

Here’s what you can do: *The next time you catch yourself about to say you’ll try, STOP. Say, “I’ll do it!” Whenever you make a commitment, you are insuring its successful accomplishment. Whenever you use “try” you’re leaving the door open for failure or falling short. It’s your total commitment that makes it possible for you to achieve your goals. Remember, there’s no such thing as “try.” Either you do it, or you don’t. So do it!*

Choose the right selling words

Prospects will listen to “you,” but “I” just turns ’em off

More than 3,000 languages are spoken in the world today. But your language, English, contains the most words and is by far the most expressive, with modern English dictionaries now listing more than 200,000 entries. Yet with so many colorful and precise words, the most frequently used is the shortest and simplest of all: “I.”

People use “I” because they enjoy talking about themselves. But while this may be fine in a casual conversation, it should never apply to a professional sales presentation. Your prospects don’t want to hear you say “I like this...” and “I

think that...” They want to hear the word “YOU!” To most prospects, the word “you” is positive, while too many “I’s” can be negative.

So make your presentations as positive as YOU can!

Here’s what you can do: *Substitute “you” for “I” in your presentations. You might also replace other negative words with more positive synonyms. Ask prospects to “approve an agreement” rather than “sign a contract.” Suggest that they “invest” rather than “buy” or “pay for it.” Offer an “opportunity,” not a “deal.” And always make a “presentation,” never give a “pitch.”*

Like waves on an ocean

Unconsciously, you are influencing the lives of those around you

Four of the greatest physicists in the world came from a small town in Germany. Tracing their lives, someone discovered that all four were taught by the same high school physics teacher. Obviously, that teacher touched each of these men in a special way, when they were just boys. Without knowing it, he touched the entire world.

It's the same with you. You may not be aware of it, but you too touch the entire world. Your influence flows out from you, often imperceptibly, like waves on an ocean. Remember that the next time you feel you're just an average person, powerless and insignificant: there are no average people; the problem lies in *thinking* you're just average.

Think back upon your life. Surely you can remember people who influenced you — caught your attention, provided you with an opportunity, or helped shape your values — without knowing the full significance of what they were doing. There may have been a teacher who introduced you to a profound idea, or a

business associate who gave your career a boost at the right time. Although unaware of it, these people changed your life, and through you, will touch the entire world. You and others around you are the ocean on which the waves of their influence roll onward.

Likewise you may not know how, or to whom, but *you* are significant. Even as you read this article, another may be doing or saying something for which *you* were the inspiration.

Here's what you can do: *Continually remind yourself that your actions — the things you do and say — really do have an impact on the people around you. This will not only help you become more careful, but it will make your influence become a more consistently positive one. Also, remain aware of how all things in life are interrelated. This will increase your understanding of the world and your place in it, while perhaps clarifying your thinking and enabling you to take advantage of the law of cause and effect.*

Six opportunities

Choose one and build a better you

1. The delusion that individual advancement is made by crushing others.
2. The tendency to worry about things that cannot be changed or corrected.
3. Insisting that a thing is impossible because we have not yet accomplished it.
4. Refusing to set aside trivial preferences.
5. Neglecting development and refinement of the mind and not acquiring the habit of reading and studying.
6. Attempting to compel other persons to believe and live as we do.

You might be wondering if these are really opportunities. Well, they are, absolutely, because each identifies an area in which you can

probably improve. A chance to improve and “build a better you” is always an opportunity.

Surprisingly, this list was written over 2,000 years ago by Cicero, the famous Roman philosopher and statesman. All six were opportunities then, and they still are today.

Take advantage of them!

Here's what you can do: *Choose just one of these opportunities — the one you feel you can benefit from most. Apply it to a specific individual or activity. For example, if you choose number one, identify who it is you are trying to compete with. Start thinking of ways to create, rather than compete. Do the same when you take advantage of the other opportunities on this list.*

“Whad’ya catch ‘em on?”

Four ways to go “fishing” for ideas

As the early morning mist begins to clear from the lake, you notice several fishermen, each in his own boat in different parts of the lake. Each is using a different bait. And each has caught a stringer-full!

But make no mistake. Those aren’t fish they’re hauling in. Those are ideas — pole-bending, record-breaking ideas. Genuine lunkers.

“Whad’ya catch ‘em on?” you ask the first.

But he doesn’t answer. He’s totally deaf. His name is Thomas Edison. He harnessed electricity, lit up the world with the incandescent light bulb, and invented the phonograph. Finally you get his attention and he explains: “Deafness has been a great asset to me. It has saved me from a lot of useless chatter and it has taught me to hear from within.”

Fishing in the next boat nearby is famed anthropologist and author, Margaret Mead. “Whad’ya catch ‘em on?” you ask. “The secret is to sweep your mind clear of every presupposition,” she replies. “Take nothing for granted. If you do, you can’t see what’s before your eyes as fresh and distinctive.”

Approaching the next fisherman, you realize he is the famous science fiction writer, Ray Bradbury. Again you ask, “Whad’ya catch ‘em on?”

In a bright, enthusiastic tone, he answers:

“All kinds of material from various fields, outrageous fields. I stuff my eyeballs with paintings, lithographs, listen to music, read essays, poetry, plays. When I was a kid, I sneaked over to the grown-up section in the library. Now I go into the children’s section, to make sure that I’m fully informed. You have to feed yourself with information every day,” Bradbury concludes.



“Wow! This is some lake,” you say to yourself as you paddle over to the fourth “idea fisherman,” who turns out to be Carl Sagan, narrator of the popular television series of years ago, “Cosmos.”

“Whad’ya catch ‘em on?” you ask.

Slowly, meticulously, Sagan turns and scrutinizes you. His response is cryptic, but his meaning is clear: “If you were to read one book each week for every week of your life, you would only have read one-tenth of one percent of all the books in the New York Public Library. The trick is to know which books to read.”

With your mental tackle box full of the advice given you by these exceedingly wise anglers, you paddle off toward a quiet bay and prepare to toss your line in. For you, too, are fishing for ideas. And you were right, this is some lake!

Here’s what you can do: *Catch more good ideas by listening to yourself, sweeping your mind clear of presuppositions, stuffing your eyeballs with all manner of outrageous material, or by being highly selective. Choose just one of these techniques, use them all, or develop your own unique approach. Pleasant fishing!*



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