



Twelve Ways To Jumpstart Creativity

As a small-business success coach specializing in the promotional products industry (and as a distributor too), I need to be creative. This is a unique industry in that creativity is a valued part of our everyday existence. Yet all of us, myself included, sometimes experience those mental blocks where, no matter how hard we try, we can't generate a new or creative solution.

Whether you're working on a new idea for a current client, looking for innovative ways to generate business or facing a

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challenging workplace problem, fresh, creative thinking can help you achieve your objectives more quickly. Studies have shown that all of us have the ability to be creative thinkers. Given the proper stimulation, those ideas will flow.

Do you need to break through? Here are my 12 best tips to jumpstart your creative juices:

1. Take A Break

This may seem counter-intuitive, but sometimes the most productive thing to do is step away from the problem in order to move closer to a solution. Go for a long walk; read a book; work out at the gym; take a shower; do something that takes you away from the challenging task. Anything to clear your head and get a fresh perspective.

2. Keep An Idea Journal

I like to carry a notepad with me at all times. Some of my most creative ideas come at times when I'm miles from the office, both literally and figuratively. I may be sitting in the dentist's waiting room or stuck in traffic, but when inspiration hits, I have my notepad and pen with me to record my thoughts. I also keep a notepad on my night table for middle-of-the-night inspirations.

3. Tape It

Use a small cassette recorder to capture creative thoughts. Some people find it easier to record their ideas rather than write them

down. If you're someone who thinks out loud, purchase a cassette recorder and use it like an idea journal.

4. Ask Others

Just about every morning I start my day by going to the fitness club for exercise. If I'm stuck for a creative solution, I share my challenge with a workout buddy. I'm sure you've heard the old adage "Two heads are better than one." Some of my most creative ideas were the result of my morning conversations. I've also consulted colleagues, friends and business mentors.

5. Listen To Music

I love music, and since I usually work alone, my radio or CD player is a constant source of stimulation. I select my music to go with the creative challenge. I find classical works great for all ideas, but I also listen to the jazz and rock stations, depending on my mood.

6. Sleep On It

This is a technique I learned many years ago. Before I go to bed, I focus my attention on a problem I want to solve. This is different than worrying about it. I just say to myself, "I need help with X." This technique allows the challenge to be planted and managed in the subconscious mind.

7. Change Your Routine

Routine breeds boredom, and it's hard to be creative when you're bored! Drive a new route to work, try a new restaurant, rearrange your office furniture or try taking a later or earlier lunch hour. The idea is to just do things differently, and the inspiration will flow.

8. Have Some Fun

When was the last time you felt like a kid? Children are naturally creative because they're uninhibited and feel anything is possible. Try going to a playground or an amusement park and let your creative energy soar.

9. Listen To Your Intuition

As we get older, we frequently get further away from what we know is instinctively true or right. If your instincts are telling you something, listen! It could be to "walk away" from a difficult situation or to call a client because you instinctively know they need your help. The important thing is to listen to those inklings; they're giving you some important information.

10. Brainstorm

Let's say you can't get past the "voice-mail barrier" to secure an appointment. Try brainstorming with a group of people – or brainstorm yourself – to identify all of the other creative ways you can con-

tact your prospects. Keep an open mind and don't let negativity enter the picture.

11. Try A Mind Map

Basically, the idea is to put a word in the center of a page and draw connections

out from it with other words or ideas you associate with it. This is a great way to get creative thought moving.

12. Use Technology

Consult industry Web sites and software. Web sites such as www.asicentral.com, www.promomart.com and www.ppai.org are great sources of industry information. They contain ideas for new promotions according to industry and budget, as well as the latest information on trends in the industry and business. Viewing them on a regular basis can lead to some very creative ideas. Software programs such as ESP are great for stimulating creativity, as well as doing research. In addition, the ASI weekly e-mail newsletter, *PromoGram*, has a creativity section and dozens of other ideas in each issue. And it's free! Sign up by sending an e-mail to feedback@asicentral.com.

More Resources

If these 12 tips aren't enough to get those creative juices flowing, turn to other resources for ideas. Here are a few titles and/or authors I recommend:

- *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* by Julia Cameron. Tarcher/Putnam Publishing. Cameron teaches creativity workshops based on the writings of this popular book.
- *The Mind Map™ Book: How to Use Radiant Thinking to Maximize Your Brain's Untapped Potential* by Tony Buzan. Plume Publishing. This is a creative technique for generating ideas by association. Mind Maps are great for brainstorming and meetings with your staff.
- Any of the books or writings of R. Buckminster Fuller. Fuller, inventor of the geodesic dome, was a man way ahead of his time and one of the most creative thinkers of the last century. ■

Rosalie Marcus is a certified business coach who specializes in coaching people in the promotional products industry on how to "stand out from the crowd and make more money!" To subscribe to her free e-mail newsletter visit her Web site www.bestbiztips.com. For a complimentary consultation reach her at Rosalie@bestbiztips.com or contact her at (215) 572-6766.