

## B O N U S   C H A P T E R

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# MORE STUDENT CASE STUDIES

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## VERONICA MARQUEZ

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PRODUCER TEAM LEADER / DIGITAL INSIGHTS

**What If! Innovation Partners, New York**

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/pub/veronica-marquez/4/55/475](http://www.linkedin.com/pub/veronica-marquez/4/55/475)

I used to cringe at the word creative. It was a word I associated with the unattainable world of artists, designers and photographers—not businesspeople. After graduating in Venezuela with a bachelor degree in business administration, I thought pursuing an MBA was the next sensible step, but as I prepared my applications I started craving something else, something that would allow me to experiment with the mystical right side of the brain. Empowered by Joseph Beuys’ philosophy that “everyone is an artist,” I was determined to “discover creativity in my

everyday life” and decided to join the liberal arts community of Emerson College.

I started my MA in Integrated Marketing Communications in September 2003 and on my second semester I took the class I was most excited (and nervous) about: Creating Thinking Copy and Design. I was excited about the possibility of discovering my own creativity, but unwelcome thoughts kept nagging and intruding with the thrilling anticipation... Would I be exposed? How long would it take people to realize I’m not creative and kick me out of the class?

I still remember the first creative assignment. I was asked to present myself with ten visuals using a variety of elements and tools such as images, objects and drawings; the brief encouraged us to “be playful, take risks and experiment.” This was my first bite of ‘being creative’ and it tasted like a delicious delicatessen; preparing that assignment felt more natural to me compared to writing an essay or practicing over and over an equation exercise. While I was carefully choosing my ten things, I realized that the difference between this brief and a traditional one (describe yourself using ten words, for example) was that it allowed me to more deeply explore; it was a process where the discovery and the reward were in the journey and not in the delivery. This exercise helped me link a vast collection of old memories, songs, anecdotes, fears and passions into a connected narrative; something impossible to accomplish with words alone.

Throughout the semester, the course encouraged us to tap into what made us tick and to look at familiar things through different lenses. For example, capturing my route from home to school brought a whole new light to the streets I thought I knew like the back of my hand—being asked to pay attention and add a purpose to my journey allowed me to discover things I had never noticed and to contemplate things I hadn’t thought about

before. Another exercise involved creating a list of the twenty things we loved the most and made sure we did at least two the week before the class. The exercise had a simple premise, but what it ignited was profound. I realized that the more I was connected to the things I loved and the more I nurtured those passions, the happier and more productive I would become—in a way, my passions became the fuel to my creativity.

Some of the principles I learned in the class: thinking expansively, discovering all the possible routes to tackle a challenge and being connected to what I love have been fundamental in my development and growth personally and professionally.

After graduating I got the job of my dreams. I started working as a creative coordinator at ?What If! Innovation Partners—a creative consulting agency that helps companies develop new products and services. A couple of years into my job I was seconded to their London office and became a project producer and eventually a senior producer. The principles learned in the creative thinking course have been the pillars of my work. A day in my office may involve participating in a brainstorming session to generate ideas or developing creative exercises to help clients think of a challenge from a fresh perspective or facilitating a qualitative research experience that will allow clients to connect with consumers in more meaningful ways; thinking creatively and problem solving are part of my daily routine.

Parallel to ?What If! and following my love for travel and culture I opened a travel and relocation agency called InstaNative, a company that helps people visiting or moving to NYC discover the city like a native. Creating a company from scratch also proved to require massive amounts of creative thinking, resourcefulness and caffeine!

My experience in the creative thinking course proved that I didn’t have to be labeled an artist to

be creative. The course taught me that applying creativity did not require just oil and a canvas. I learned that creativity happens when I look up instead of down, when I take new paths, try new

things and challenge myself to think differently. I no longer cringe at the word creative. I've embraced its meaning and it's now a big part of my life.



## *Key Insights*

- 1. Nurture what you love.** Set aside time, it can be once a week or twice a month, to do something you love. Use this time to read, draw, sit at a café, write, etc. I think it's important to give the same importance to the things we love that we give to the other structured things we have in life. It's great to be spontaneous, but if we leave the things we love to "when I have time," weeks might go by without doing anything we really enjoy.
- 2. Don't sabotage yourself.** It's hard to control the voices in our mind telling us "I'm not good enough," "my colleagues are better than I am," etc. Try acknowledging those thoughts (which tend to always be the same) instead of fighting against them. The more we fight, the louder the negative voices become. Instead, hear them and look at them in the face; then, move on.
- 3. Live with one foot on the comfort zone and the other on the stretch zone.** Be open for new adventures and challenges. If it's a little bit scary, it means it belongs in the stretch zone, so go for it. Say yes and enjoy the moment. And if it doesn't work out, at least you'll have a good story to tell.