



TRANG PHAN

BRAND PLANNER

The Richards Group, Dallas

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/trangphan91

Twitter: @itsTrangYall

Creativity itself is a very abstract concept. We are surrounded by it, practice it and for some of us lucky ones, we get paid to be creative. The Creative Thinking course allowed me to unlock my creative potential and provide a new perspective to problem solving. When I started the course, I was skeptical because like most people, I believed that one is either creative or they are not.

What I discovered was that creativity is an innate skill we all possess. Whether or not we practice this skill determines our creative intake and offerings. In addition to creativity coming from within, I also quickly discovered that we could build our creativity through our environment and collaboration. I had signed up for a course about creative thinking, but everything I learned had exceeded my expectations. I eventually discovered that the lessons I learned in that one semester would carry me through to the most exciting year of my college career and beyond.

I think a big challenge when it comes to creative and breakthrough thinking is the action of being tested for the better. We're all capable of producing good work, but when we realize our creative potential, we will be capable of producing great work. This kind of work must always be divergent—a concept that I had overlooked until my class. We must always push ourselves to be better and produce work that we are proud of and, most important, that we believe in. I took

this particular lesson to heart when two of my classmates and I entered a local competition for George P. Johnson, a global experience marketing agency. The creative thinking course paid off for our whole team when we made it to the final rounds and received second place and a guaranteed internship at the agency. This experience showed me that coming up with an edgy idea that your team believes in is better than pushing for an unoriginal idea.

Another way one can push oneself is to take our talents to a new level. One of the things I am most grateful for through this whole experience is that my professor recognized my talent of origami. He did not let this go unnoticed, and it motivated me to always incorporate the origami mind-set into creativity. I always had a knack for manipulating paper into different art forms and I was encouraged to use this to my advantage when trying to have a creative breakthrough. My experience folding with the origami organization at MIT had allowed me to provide a unique perspective to everything I'd have to face. I took this lesson to heart when the class ended and carried it out through all of senior

year. I had a very successful internship at Deutsch in L.A. I was an account-planning intern, a position that involves lots of research and logical insights. I was able to take the creative thinking lessons I'd learn from the course and incorporate them into all of my tasks for the strategy team. Being creative allows me to connect the dots in a unique way. It allows me to show that I have a different perspective on the problem, a crucial skill that can help carry me through my career as well as everyday life.

There is a quote in George Lois' book, *Damn Good Advice* that has always stuck with me and perfectly describes the main key takeaway for the course and how it has enriched my life. "In the act of creativity, being careful guarantees sameness and mediocrity, which means our work will be invisible. Better to be reckless than careful. Better to be bold than safe. Better to have your work seen and remembered, or you've struck out. There is no middle ground." (*Damn Good Advice*, 2012) To this day, I still take everything I learned in the course with me when I am solving a new problem or ideating for a new big idea.



Key Insights

1. When in doubt of a future workplace, think about the 4Ps of Creativity. When you use these criteria and discover more information about the workplace, make sure it aligns with your own 4Ps. It's very important to work for a company that recognizes your full potential and shares your philosophy.
2. The most important question you will learn to ask is "Why not?" This sums up divergent thinking in a simple phrase. You should always encourage yourself to think as if nothing is impossible because with the right people on your team, everything can be possible. Curiosity and ambition are great companions.
3. Talent is wasted when it's not practiced. Stay connected and informed of what's going on in the industry. Creative thinking is a sport that you must constantly condition for in order to be successful. Do not waste it and practice it by going out and learning about how others stay creative and exercise your brain with creative tasks every day.