



REBECCA HEMPEN

INNOVATION RESEARCHER

HYVE AG, Munich, Germany

LinkedIn: de.linkedin.com/in/rebeccahempfen

Twitter: @BeccsRebecca

I never really saw myself as a creative person, but through the Creative Thinking class, I realized that anybody—including me!—can be creative. And more important, anybody can practice and enhance their creativity through specific techniques. I started going on Artist Dates, writing Morning Pages and pushing myself to “go crazy with my ideas.” And throughout the course of the semester I felt myself thinking in different directions, even surprising myself at times.

Of course these new methods of creative thinking did not only find their way into my course work, but also into my internship and job applications. Instead of writing applications that would be like everybody else’s, I was on a mission to come up with ways to make me stand out. I created a mini-magazine about myself that would replace a resume or CV. It was hard work but incredibly fun, and it still is one of my proudest creative accomplishments. This was also a way of showing employers that I was creative without having to list creativity as one of my skills. And so I landed an amazing internship where I worked on several projects for which I had a lot of freedom. Realizing that I was able to come up with creative applications—that landed me great positions—gave me the confidence I needed at the start of my career.

I soon realized that creative thinking can not only be applied to marketing strategies and tactics and presentations, but also to such things as spread-

sheets and analyses. Letting yourself think creatively in the latter areas both makes work more fun and impresses employers. Of course there are times where people do not appreciate your ideas and it becomes hard work to sell them. There will always be people who prefer to stick with the status quo, so you have to learn to deal with opposition and skeptics. At times, this may be harder than coming up with creative solutions!

Now working as an innovation researcher, I have to think creatively throughout each entire project. Defining and exploring the research field requires me to think in all directions, not only the most obvious or logical ones. In the analysis phase I have to read into consumers' statements, understand how they relate and deduce meaningful insights. Through idea-generation sessions we then come up with possible innovations for clients based on these insights. Often clients are looking for completely new ideas, so it is essential to present them with exciting and inspiring possibilities.

In all three of these steps mind maps and the "white hat" are especially useful, as they allow you to gather all your ideas without censoring or judging yourself or project members. The research re-

sults and innovation ideas are interesting, new and exciting so I put a lot of effort into creating final presentations that are different from any final presentation clients have seen before. Again, trying to stand out rather than to fit in is a great method of getting your information and ideas across.

Thinking more creatively for class projects and now while working on client projects in professional settings naturally also spilled over into my free time, where I have been doing projects for my home, my daughter and gifts. Creating actual art—to keep or to give away—is relaxing, inspiring and incredibly gratifying.

So, all in all, creative thinking is something you can learn but it is something you have to practice and (especially in the beginning) consciously push. Thomas Vogel provides tools and systematic methods to practice creativity and to employ creative thinking and problem solving in a directed manner. Pushing myself to think more creatively makes work more fun, unique and successful and makes play more diverse, meaningful and interesting. It is easy to fall into a rut or become discouraged by naysayers, so it is essential to consciously practice and employ creative thinking.



Key Insights

1. Creative thinking is something that can and needs to be practiced.
2. Creative thinking can be done using specific tools in a methodical manner.
3. Creative thinking improves your work and your play.