



CYRIL URBANO

ASSOCIATE PRODUCT MANAGER

Pfizer Consumer Healthcare, Madison NJ

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/pub/cyril-urbano/9/650/39

From the moment I had an understanding of how the world works, I've always known that I had a creative streak. My creative expression was always seen onstage—whether dancing to some familiar tune, belting out a song in front of crowds or portraying a role in a stage play. Back then, that was all the creativity I knew—artistic self-expression. I carried this notion throughout most of my life and had delineated the right brain from the left—assuming that these are two disparate parts of my thinking. Even with my life as a marketing professional prior to graduate school, I had reserved the right hemisphere of my brain for tasks that would require this all-too-fluffy idea of creativity—from evaluating storyboards, packaging designs and print ads to creating eye-catching slideshow presentations. My world before the creative thinking course was divided into two compartmentalized dimensions of thinking.

This entire notion was debunked when I took a class on creativity back in 2010. The class provided a veritable paradigm shift on how I look at creativity and its role not only in business but in the way human beings lead their lives. The class created a strong creative drive that strengthened my inner problem solver. The unconventional learning method provided a fertile ground for me to appreciate the all-encompassing role of creativity. Moreover the class was

an impetus for me to realize that the creative process has a structure and that there are strategies one can employ to ensure that creativity is nurtured.

I work as a product manager for one of the top biopharmaceutical companies in the United States. My role allows me to practice problem solving every single day and limitless opportunities emerge to apply creativity to my work, sometimes in the guise of resourcefulness, pushing the envelope or applying breakthrough thinking. Contrary to what experts say about metrics, standards and sales goals killing creativity, I have found myself applying creative thinking to how I manage my job—from the simplest act of developing a system of tracking my tasks to the most complex act of selling my idea to our stakeholders. There is always a place for creativity in business.

Author and creativity expert Edward de Bono said, “As all organizations reach a plateau of competence, it is only better concepts that will provide the competitive advantage.” You don’t arrive at a better concept by just looking at numbers or trend lines. The genesis of a better concept comes from a viable insight distilled from creative thinking. When we look at creativity from that perspective, the realization that it’s inextricably linked to our work and way of life becomes evident.



Key Insights

1. Curiosity is key to creative thinking

To borrow Diane Sawyer’s words: “Wake up curious. And wake up determined to try to get the answer.” Curiosity can open a whole slew of possibilities for any challenge that’s in front of you. In my role as a marketing professional, I’ve championed some process improvements in our team by always asking “What if?” Curiosity is the tireless effort to not just accept the norm and is the spark that opens up creative thinking. Keep on asking “What if?”

2. Exposure and openness nurture the creative spirit

Divergent experiences are impetus to changing paradigms. There are a multitude of ways to expose ourselves to stimuli—from hanging out with different types of people to picking up a new habit to traveling. The turning point of this exposure is our ability and willingness to embrace this as part of our collective creative experience. Stimuli are needed to ignite the creative spirit but we need openness to let it flourish.

3. Creativity is an integral part of problem solving

This is undoubtedly the best lesson I’ve learned about creativity. Whether the challenge is a marketing tactic that aims to increase market share, a fundraising event you’re managing for an organization or an adventurous vacation you’re planning for summer—creative thinking has the ability to unlock that problem and match it with a viable and, oftentimes, a fulfilling solution. At this juncture, creativity becomes synonymous with resourcefulness, breakthrough thinking or an effort to push the envelope. When we use creative thinking to solve our problems, be they mundane, strategic, complex or seemingly insurmountable, a seamless melding of both the right and left-brain can be achieved.