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**T**here was a time when I considered myself creative without qualifications. I think I was eight. After that point there was definitely a creeping self-consciousness that always took what others thought into consideration, and worried that whatever it was, it wasn't good enough. This isn't a conscious change of thinking, but it happens to most, and then our thinking and our work becomes qualified. Compliments are returned with, "Thanks, but I could have done better." Sometimes that insecurity is a tool to push the idea further, but what happens when it prevents you from realizing your potential? Or stops you from considering all the solutions because they are discounted before they are even fully realized? You may end up working in an unfulfilling corporate job for eight years before finding the courage to go back to school, although, that might just be me.

Before I entered Emerson's Global Marketing Communications and Advertising program, or GMCA, I was limited. I had fixed ideas about what I was doing, where I was going and how the masters program would get me to those points. Creative Thinking and Problem Solving completely changed not just those thoughts, but how I think in general. Learning about the creative process and how to apply it, completely changed the way I approach problems. This journey was uncomfortable, but in the best way. There were moments that

felt like sheer desperation when grappling with the challenges, but the outcomes were always that much better for it. And now, the process of creative thinking and ideation is integrated into how I approach any project or problem, extending into my professional and personal life.

I think that this is a skill that needs to be continuously cultivated, and that may be difficult to understand. Creative thinking is often thought of as an innate talent. The most meaningful take away from this class and the experiences inspired by it is that there actually is a process and being aware of how your mind works is just as important as the idea itself. Being able to think divergently allows for those crazy, amazing solutions and that changes “What if?” into “Why not?”.

Keeping this type of energy and commitment to the creative thinking process takes some work and a good amount of dedication. Like any skill, you need to practice. After finishing the class and

leaving the school environment, the biggest challenge is ensuring that you can devote time and energy to this type of problem solving. The techniques and exercises developed here are essential to this goal.

Before finishing the program, I, along with two classmates, were engaged and inspired enough by the process to start our own consulting firm. We had our first client by the end of semester that tasked us with the branding, design concept, and the marketing campaign. Together, we collaborated through the ideation phase and the design concepts to present the client with three options for their vision. The skills we learnt in this class were invaluable as we progressed from rough ideas to fully formed concepts.

I know that in each step of my professional life and my personal life, the things learnt in this class and program will be far reaching beneficial to my future development.



## *Key Insights*

1. Keep ideating. Your first idea is almost never the best.
2. Think bigger – divergent thinking will take a common idea and light it on fire
3. Trust yourself – it's okay to be vulnerable in this process