

### Use Your Creativity!

By Michael Brown

*Editor's Note: What it is about spring that brings a renewed quest for the pursuit of excellence, a need to improve upon current systems, and an unleashing of company funds for new Oracle® projects? It's April 1st! "Happy April Fool's Day!" Shouldn't the ORAtips Humor Associate Editor have written something funny with a few cartoons thrown in for good measure and a good laugh? Not this time, but what follows is certainly witty, definitely fun, thought provoking, and will undoubtedly get some reaction during the water cooler meeting on Monday morning.*

#### Introduction

The challenge for all of us, both individually and collectively, is to make the best use of our resources. And some of the more obvious resources include our time, talents, networking contacts, employees, skill sets, and unique world views. But encompassing all of those things is the often-used but little-understood concept: creativity.

The following is a brief overview and some suggestions for finding your Oracle creativity side.

#### Q. What is this thing called creativity?

**A.** It's a gift, like breathing. It's given at birth and is a natural part of being alive. Perhaps the most creative beings on the planet are children, since they are open to everything and are present and available.

Watch any child with a new toy. They will five-sense it: smell it, touch it, shake it for sound, examine it minutely, and certainly try to eat it. The focus is absolute.

Picasso once said, "It takes a long time to become young."

Any Oracle customer can tell you, "There is always a better, faster, smarter way to tackle any problem by using Oracle."

#### Q. Is there a simple definition?

**A.** It's looking at old things in a new way. And the product of that new way can be anything from improved Oracle code to a warehouse-tracking tool to a space station running a database to gauge the atmosphere.

#### Q. What about factors such as heredity and education?

**A.** There does not seem to be any correlation. Even so-called intelligence is not connected in any direct way, beyond a minimum. And since we now recognize at least eight different kinds of intelligence, making the connection gets complicated. Creativity just IS, like electricity. It can be nurtured and cultivated, or degraded and snuffed-out.

You do not necessarily need an IT or business degree to use and understand Oracle; you just need to believe in your abilities to get the job done.

#### Q. Doesn't it depend on circumstances?

**A.** Yes...and no. But absent any kind of favorable conditions or supportive environment, there have been many instances when individuals have been amazingly creative and original. There is that line from Shakespeare, "Many are the uses of adversity." So it can be spurred by failure, accident, defeat, as well as fun and fantasy.

Mary Kay, the founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics, had a string of turndowns and disappointments before building a successful company. One of the success symbols in her company is the gold bumblebee. It was never supposed to fly. She was told that she would never make it....

BZZZZZZZZZZZZ!

And, as much as we love to dislike him, Larry Ellison sets the bar high for pursuit of excellence, no matter the obstacle or circumstance.

#### Q. So if creativity is natural and pretty evenly distributed, why isn't it used more often?

**A.** Censors, both internal and external, play a big part in shutting off the flow. If kids hear about all the things they can't do, and "NO!" is a dominant message when growing up, that can be internalized.

In school and on standardized tests, is there more than one right answer? Not usually.

And on the job, there can be implicit and explicit rules of behavior that include some variations of "Don't rock the boat!", "You're not being paid to think", "That kind of stuff is way above your pay grade", or "You want to get along, go along."

When was the last time any of us were asked for our new, fresh, wild, or unconventional ideas or opinions? It doesn't happen that often. The world of businesses using Oracle can appear to be all about production and profits and maximizing both. But there is another value that is not often addressed. As Tom Peters says,

“Ultimately, it’s not about the software or the hardware; it’s about the brainware.”

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**Q. How about some more business examples?**

**A.** Conrad Hilton started his Hilton chain of hotels during the West’s oil boom. In his book, *Be My Guest*, he talks about finding big hotel lobbies full of workers who couldn’t get a room. Everyone else saw the big lobby as well. Conrad saw empty space that could be turned into needed rooms, which he promptly built.

Bucky Fuller invented the geodesic dome and many other wonderful things. He once commented on all the waste that occurs during housing construction. “A scientist has never looked at plumbing.”

And if you ask most people in any business why they do things in a certain way, you might hear “We always do it that way. It’s how we learned to do it.” They could be so busy working IN the business that they neglect working ON the business. The creative approach is far different and can be far more profitable.

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**Q. OK, what is the creative approach and what are some ways to use it?**

**A.** First of all, honor ideas. They are the fruits of being alive and in the world. And ideas can take the form of dreams, hunches, doodles, inklings, observations – all is grist for the mill.

Second, write them down, draw them out, log them in, and give them a life and tangibility. A good and simple habit is to have pad and pencil handy, especially when you are doing something that quiets the conscious mind. Washing the car or dishes, or cooking a meal, or taking a shower

are all times when the subconscious becomes obvious.

Be prepared! We can turn to Shakespeare’s Hamlet, “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

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**Q. Is the creative approach a mechanical process?**

**A.** It is much more encompassing, and involves dreams, memory, imagination, experiences, desires, and a whole range of emotions. It does have mechanical elements, however, that can be turned into habits that support the creative enactment. And the creative approach is distinct from the critical approach. So, when the ideas are coming and the juices are flowing, that’s when you let it happen. The time to critique and cull what seems to be most fruitful comes from a different part of the brain and is reserved for a different phase of the process.

As Scott Adams said, “Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.”

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**Q. What else is important for the creative process?**

**A.** CREATIVE LOAFING! Let the subconscious bubble up with solutions while you are doing something very different. Also, take in information from many different fields, industries, cultures, and professions. Answers come from ANYWHERE!

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**Q. What can a company do to promote the creative approach?**

**A.** They can value ideas and innovation and change, from the top down. Not just lip service, but active support. How? Well, Disney Studios has a cork-lined wall designed to hold

3X5 cards. The process is called ideation or imagineering.

Brainstorming sessions are an integral part of the business. Any company can reach out, request, support, and reward ideas, document them, and be savvy about the upside.

The entire computer and IT industry was born in a garage! People and their creations can be spectacular, when given half a chance.

“I couldn’t find the sports car of my dreams, so I built it myself.” – Dr. Ferdinand Porsche.

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**Q. OK, but I’m dense. What does all of this really have to do with Oracle?**

**A.** EVERYTHING!! There isn’t a process or application or module or project that can’t be attached or detached or piggybacked or scaled to some new, unimagined industry.

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**Q. Yes, but how, exactly?**

**A.** I’ll leave you with a couplet by Albert Einstein, “A thought that sometimes makes me hazy, am I or are the others crazy?”

**Michael Brown, *New Future Media*** – Mike is an ORAtips associate editor heading up our Humor Department. Coupled with running his own small production company of talented filmmakers, entrepreneurs, and business people, Mike brings with him many years of stand-up comedy and a powerful writing style that lends to insightful candor about the world of Oracle technology. You may contact Mike Brown at [Mike.Brown@ERPtips.com](mailto:Mike.Brown@ERPtips.com). 

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