



Ten Ways to Drive Creativity in Uncertain Times

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In the midst of a global pandemic, two words can describe the world's shift in communication, workflow and creativity, according to writer, speaker and coach Richard Holman.

"The underlying mood is one of uncertainty and fearfulness. This is a problem when it comes to creativity. Fear is brilliant at priming us to fight or take flight, but it's terrible for creating that unselfconscious flow that generates creativity."

During Promax's live webinar on Tuesday, "Driving Creativity in Uncertain Times," Holman provided 10 tips to stay focused, inspired and creative amid today's current climate.

"I believe in the universal power of art, stories and creativity and I don't believe that's going to change. I think we need these stories more than ever and that's certainly my focus at the moment."

Chill Out

Creativity is a state of mind, and you can't tap into that if you're overthinking or

focused on the worst, Holman said. The word "inspiration" means "to take a deep breath;" therefore, taking a moment to breathe and relax is where you should start.

Some of Holman's coping methods include running in the hills of South Wales and meditating, which he recommends to unwind. He also suggests taking a moment to reflect on creativity itself.

"Carve out a little time to lose yourself in the beauty of ideas. Know that if you are in that creative moment, there is nothing better or more beautiful."

Let The Ideas Have You

Don't spend too much time trying to "squeeze" ideas out of your mind. Instead, sit back and let the ideas that are out there come to you, Holman said.

Fleabag and Killing Eve creator Phoebe Waller-Bridge once said, "I always feel like the possibilities are there, floating around you, just you have to reach out and catch them." That's similar to filmmaker David Lynch's philosophy that compares ideas to fish in the below spot.

"They're all out there waiting to be caught. The question is, how do we catch them?" Holman said.

Don't Evaluate Too Soon

The frontal cortex serves as the evaluative part of our brains, however, it's not where creativity happens. Holman believes it's important to divide a new project into two phases: one that focuses on quantity, or the creative flow of ideas, and the other that shapes or evaluates the ideas.

"Be carefree, don't worry about whether the idea is derivative or original, just go for as many as possible—Halfway through, become ruthless in how you evaluate your ideas for quality," he said.

Play Your Own Game

Holman said that every person and company has different strengths, and it's important to identify yours and play to them to achieve the best, most creative, outcome. Stop worrying about the competition and play your own game, because if you apply the same strategy as someone else, you'll end up with the same unremarkable solution.

He then drew conclusions between the infamous rivalry between professional tennis players Boris Becker and Andre Agassi. While the two went head-to-head for years, Agassi one-upped his opponent after noticing that whenever Becker would serve, he would stick his tongue out in the opposite direction from which he was serving. Agassi won nine out of the next 11 Grand Slam tournaments

against Becker, even though Becker had the much more powerful serve.

Don't Let Your Assumptions Weigh You Down

Because today's climate and work environment are far from normal, step back from the way you normally do things to open yourself up to new possibilities.

"Now is the perfect time to challenge the assumptions that you've always taken for granted," Holman said.

He used Chris Wilson, a former inmate who creatively sourced and made his own painting supplies, as an example. With no access to these supplies behind prison walls, Wilson taught himself to make brushes from his own hair and paint from M&Ms and Skittles.

Embrace Limitations

Limitations can be your friend, but only if you make them work for you and don't allow them to be definitive.

"What can you use and how can you make the problem into the solution?" Holman said.

It's Okay to Steal, But Don't Be a Cannibal

Similar to Steve Jobs, who once claimed he "stole" great ideas from poets and musicians, take ideas and inspiration from other areas of the world and make it your own, Holman said.

"What's not okay is cannibalism for me that's when you take ideas or inspiration from within your own genre! Cannibalism never ends well."

The concept is similar to a series of videos by Vugar Efendi, "Film Meets Art," which compares films and the artistic inspiration behind them.

Start Small

You're bound to get stuck if you're focused on too many things from the get-go. If you are to get to the top of the mountain, you just need to put one foot in front of another, Holman said.

"Sometimes we don't know where our creative journey is going to end up. In fact, that's part of [its] beauty."

Your Worst Idea Could Be Your Best

Holman suggests asking yourself: "what's the worst idea I could come up with for this project, what's the worst that could happen?" This method allows you to

throw yourself into unpredictable, unexplored places where you can potentially find some great ideas.

Be Prepared to Fail

What seems like failure in the moment may not be failure in the long-term, Holman said.

He drew comparisons to Borja resident Cecilia Giménez who offered to restore a once-regal image of Christ painted on a local church wall that had sustained serious damage over the years. The process led to the now-infamous "Monkey Christ" (also known as Potato Jesus)-a botched painting that faced criticism and circulated the internet as a meme.

Despite its apparent failure, the venture turned into a large success for Borja and its elderly residents. Borja now gets about 16,000 tourists per year, and the money has secured jobs for caretakers and helps fund places at Borja's care home for the elderly.

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In the end, Holman suggests leaning into this uncertain time by viewing it as a clean slate with endless creative opportunities.

"It is kind of a reset for all of us in our lifestyles and the way we work, treat the planet, spend money, consume thingsâ€¦ It really forces a universal reevaluation of everything and it's very hard to say what will come out of that," he said.

Promax's next live webinar, "The Evolving Global Entertainment DTC Landscape," is this Thursday, April 16 at 12 p.m. PT. Registration is now open.

Check out Holman's full session below: