

# Analyzation and Application of the Creative Process

by

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Although many people fail to recognize it, everyone has the ability to be creative in their own lives. The difference between the people that are considered to be 'creative' in nature and the 'average' person is that the 'creative' person has mastered every faction of the creative process and uses it to further themselves or their goals. In the Lincoln Park Community Shelter group, we were able to successfully utilize the creative process in a collaborative effort to determine our goal and message as well as the tactics and strategies we would use to achieve that goal.

Although the definition of the creative process varies from author to author and artist to artist, the fundamentals are almost always identical. Roger Von Oech describes the process not as a set of steps, but a cast of roles. According to Von Oech, every person or group that chooses to participate in the creative process needs to play the roles of the Explorer, the Artist, the Judge, and the Warrior. Each role has a specific set of tasks that must be accomplished successfully in order for the process itself to be successful. The role of Explorer is responsible for the gathering of facts, knowledge, concepts, and whatever else will contribute to the formation of an idea. The Artist then takes what is gathered and arranges it in new and interesting manners to formulate the new idea. The role of Judge is then employed to apply critical evaluation of the evidence to ultimately decide if the idea is worthwhile. Finally, the Warrior role is responsible for determining and implementing a strategy to bring the idea into the

marketplace. Although the roles are vastly different, each role has equal importance and is necessary to complete the creative process successfully. Any breakdown in the roles or the timing of implementing those roles can hinder the creative process and ultimately lead to the failure of the process itself.

Several different inner obstacles can be responsible for directly affecting the creative process in a negative way. In 'Our Hidden Potential', Ruth Richards identifies some of the inner obstacles that often stymie the process. One such example is writer's block. Writer's block may have many causes, but all end in the same result: a complete halt of the creative process. Another potential roadblock is the subconscious block which Richards calls Pandora's Box. It can be attributed to emotions like fear, guilt, or anger. A third example of an obstacle would be the pathologizing of creativity, essentially equating creativity with strange or dangerous behavior. These are just a few of the possible issues that may cause difficulty during the creative process.

Our group was tasked with assisting the Lincoln Park Community Shelter with their social media marketing effort to achieve their goals. After initially perusing their website and examining their existing social media efforts, we were impressed and slightly confused. At first glance, they had already implemented all the major social media marketing tools. They had a Facebook page, a Twitter account, a blog, and a polished website. How could we as a group of students just learning about the intricacies of social media marketing possibly help an organization that already seemed well-equipped to handle a social media marketing effort on their own?

We met with a representative from the Shelter and determined that their goal was to increase monetary donations from younger volunteers who historically had not donated previously. According to a Pew Internet Project survey, almost three-quarters of teens and young adults aged 18-29 use social media, so the use of social media to reach this target audience was a perfect choice. But in my mind, the new goal presented to us redefined the scope of the project itself. My background is in technology and implementation and because of that, my initial thoughts of the project were more along those lines. But with the Shelter already having implemented the framework for their social media effort, I quickly realized that our task would be more on the creative side than the implementation side. Our group would have to use the creative process to generate a process and message that would increase donorship among their younger volunteers through social media.

The first step of the process that we underwent was the gathering of information, or as Von Oech would describe it, the role of the Explorer. We started the gathering of information by visiting the Shelter itself. We interviewed staff and spoke with guests to get a feel for the Shelter, the level of care it provides, and what the shelter meant to their residents, or 'guests'. We then proceeded to interview current donors and volunteers to get a better feel of what was driving the donors to donate and what was prohibiting the volunteers from donating monetarily. Simultaneously we were gathering more knowledge of social media as well as the creative process through our assigned readings and class discussions.

After we had gathered all of the information we felt necessary to continue with the process, we proceeded to the next role: the Artist. By evaluating all the interviews we conducted as well as our personal observations, it was apparent that the Shelter was providing a huge benefit to the community and its residents and the current donors were motivated by this. We quickly determined that this needed to be part of the message we would convey to possible donors. Our goal was to reach possible donors through an emotional plea to raise awareness and generate donations. Through different collaborative brainstorming techniques we formulated a value proposition statement on which to base our message around.

We also needed to determine a tactical strategy that would empower the Shelter to generate revenue from its younger volunteers. From the data we gathered on the current donation process combined with the interviews from the younger volunteers, we determined that there was no easy process in place for volunteers to donate smaller amounts of money. After further brainstorming sessions, we determined that the best way to raise funds is to install the habit early with newer volunteers and make the recurring process easy to onboard existing volunteers. We decided to recommend an online registration process for new volunteers that linked to their website and prominently featured a radio button allowing you donate a recommended initial amount, probably in the \$5-\$10 range. This registration would also allow them to collect demographic data on their new volunteer base, something they are sorely lacking. A program would also be designed to facilitate an auto-drafted small amount from a bank account or credit card to generate recurring revenue. The Shelter could then reach their existing volunteer base by use of an email marketing campaign using the message

based on the value proposition statement we created. The goal of the email marketing would be to raise awareness of the auto-draft program amongst current volunteers and encourage them to participate. The Artist stage of the creative process was obviously the most fruitful for our group.

The third step in the process, the role of the Judge, might be the toughest as it requires you to be introspective and really determine whether or not our ideas and strategies are valid. Drawing on our group's collective past experiences with business projects and principles, we felt confident that our strategy was sound. More difficult to judge however, would be the message with which we would convince the volunteers to donate. But we felt that value proposition statement we put together did an effective job of conveying both the emotional aspect as well as the service aspect of the Shelter. We felt strongly that a message based on the statement would be successful.

The last role that our group needed to fulfill to complete the creative process was the role of the Warrior. The Warrior phase ultimately determines how the product gets to the marketplace and becomes the driving force behind the product launch. You could choose to equate our tactical strategy with how we planned to bring this plan to the marketplace, but in my mind our situation was different. In our group's case, the marketplace was very specific. We had to sell the idea and strategy to one specific client, the Lincoln Park Community Shelter. Our presentation was the manner in which we would deliver the content to our client, there would be no follow-up meetings or phone calls to discuss and potentially tweak our ideas. Because of this, we worked both in and out of class to polish the presentation. We put together slides as well as

separate speaking roles tied to the slides for a cohesive and tight presentation. The fact that we worked very tenaciously on the presentation portion really personified the role of the Warrior.

Ultimately, the success of the creative process will be judged not by ourselves, but by the Lincoln Park Community Shelter. Their level of satisfaction with the idea will be shown in terms of whether or not they adopt the idea and implement the strategies we laid out. But speaking from my personal beliefs, I believe the strategy is sound and the message is compelling. I feel the effort will be viewed as a success. It then follows that because the end result was a success, the creative process was a success. Our group avoided the potential roadblocks to the creative process such as writers' block and Pandora's box. We navigated each role within the creative process with confidence and combined each role with our collaborative efforts to produce a successful end result. In the end, as a group we employed the creative process successfully.

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