

**Breakthrough Creativity:
How to Use Your Talents for More Creative Leadership
Presented by Dr. Lynne Levesque
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Q: What are your thoughts about the relationship of creativity and empowerment? ~ Deborah

A: I have not done a great deal of study around the subject of empowerment, but from my knowledge of creativity, I believe the following:

- Awareness of one's creativity builds personal self-esteem which can lead to greater confidence in one's ability to achieve goals and objectives
- With greater self-confidence, an individual can empower him or herself to do what needs to be done
- While efforts to promote more empowerment within the organization are certainly beneficial, individuals too often put more limits around their own creativity and abilities than are externally imposed.

Q: How do you create a culture of creativity throughout all levels of the workforce? ~ Carla

A: Cultivating creativity throughout an organization requires multiple initiatives at different levels in the organization:

- Senior leaders have to be sure they are modeling the creative and innovative behavior they want from others in the organization in terms of the questions they ask, their responses to new ideas, etc.
- Corporate values and organizational rewards, goals and objectives need to be aligned with a strategy for more creativity and innovation
- Creativity needs to be defined to assure that all members of the workforce understand expectations
- For more suggestions, please see [Leadership steps for more creativity](#)

Q: How can you apply creativity if you have to give factual and straight-forward results that depend on the input of others? ~ Stephanie

A: It is true that some work products themselves do not require creativity, or doing something differently than what has been prescribed. However, creativity can be used to build a better team and improve communication and teamwork. It's possible that through these efforts, the team might uncover more efficient ways to achieve results

Q: Do you see a connection between the power of creativity and Gallup's Strengths Finders 2.0? ~ Rudy

A: The Gallup's Strengths Finders 2.0, or the CliftonStrengths, also use the term "talents," although it is defined differently. From what I know about the assessment, I would say that the eight creative talents can be used across the four themes of working with information, making things happen, influencing others and building relationships to produce different and valuable results.

Q: Please explain the division of the eight Creative Talents into the two categories. ~ Jack

A: There are actually two sets of categories, originally described by Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. Since I am not clear as to which one you are questioning, I will address both:

1. Processes for **data gathering and decision making**: The data gathering functions of sensing and intuiting address the different ways we see the world, collect data and generate ideas. The decision making functions of thinking and feeling address the different ways we go about making judgments and doing something with that collected information and those generated ideas.
2. **Introverted and extraverted**: These terms refer to the orientations that govern those functions or processes. The introverted functions/talents (e.g., the Navigator, Visionary, Pilot and Poet) tend to be more private and reflective, while the extraverted functions/talents (e.g., Adventurer, Explorer, Pilot, and Diplomat) tend to reach out to the world around them for inspiration and action.

The "Breakthrough Creativity Profile Participant Guide" and "Breakthrough Creativity Profile Facilitator Guide" provide much more detailed information.

Additional questions from the past that you might want to use?

Q: How can a person who is an introvert harness their creativity? ~ Marla

A: First of all, it's very important to recognize that according to Carl Jung, upon whom the Breakthrough Creativity Framework is based, people aren't introverted. It's the functions/talents that are introverted or extraverted. That being said, a person who finds that both their favorite talents are introverted can harness their creativity by:

1. Honoring and appreciating their unique brand of creativity;
2. Recognizing that they have extraverted talents that they can access, if they want to;
3. Speaking to your supervisor or team leader at an appropriate time and together developing a way to bring your more introverted brand of creativity into the team's processes, through more time to reflect or incubate on ideas (always important for any team!) and through the use of tools like Brainwriting, instead of always relying on brainstorming which doesn't always produce the most creative results for any team!

4. Recognizing that you are not alone in needing more private or reflection time so that encouraging more time to reflect will enable everyone to contribute; and finally
5. Working to develop the courage you need to share your ideas!

Q: Is it possible to find yourself in a "combo" of 2 of these? ~ Elizabeth

A: There are two possible answers to this question: that you have ties between two decision making or two data collecting talents or that you have ties across several of the talents. In either situation, such a pattern does need to be consciously managed:

First, I might suggest that you take the 16-item Breakthrough Creativity Profile to be sure you actually do prefer have ties or prefer all or some of the talents equally. If indeed you have ties or close scores, then you should consider whether this pattern is causing you any problems. Since we have all the talents within us and your scores can reflect experience or context, individuals who have had to flex among all the talents over a management career, for example, may have more balanced scores. If ties in talents can be consciously managed, then such a pattern can potentially lead to more creative results. An example of someone with many talents at his fingertips was Leonardo DaVinci.

However, ties in talents that are not consciously managed can produce less than optimal creative results. They may cause you to take longer than is appropriate to collect data and make decisions, for example, given your appreciation for all "sides of the story." So be sure you are aware when this pattern might be causing problems and be ready to determine which of your talents is the most appropriate to use in that particular situation.

Q: What if I can't decide what my preferred talents are? ~Beth

A. If you can't decide, I suggest you purchase the Breakthrough Creativity Profile which I developed to help individuals identify their favorite talents. The individual profile, which is available through HRDQ, also contains more detailed information on the talents. A team profile can be generated from the individual profiles of team members. Instructions are available in the Facilitator Guide.

Q: In this definition of creativity, how does innovation fit in? ~ Mark

A: The Breakthrough Creativity definition of creativity combines the generation of new and useful ideas, or what is often called "creativity," and the implementation of those ideas, or what is sometimes called "innovation." In the Breakthrough Creativity approach,

creativity is the individual's ability to consciously produce different and valuable results; *innovation* is the organization's ability to leverage the creativity of its employees to achieve new and different value for stakeholders. Just one word of caution: you might want to check to see if your organization uses these terms differently since you want to be sure you are aligned with your organization's definition!

Q: What tools and techniques work best with each talent?

A: There is a wide variety of tools and techniques available to help with creative problem solving and decision making. No one tool works necessarily best for each talent. No one size fits all. For example, brainstorming might work well with those who favor the Explorer and Adventurer talents that are more externally oriented and enjoy being with others. Brainwriting or journaling might be more appropriate for those who prefer the Navigator and Visionary talents. More structured approaches such as TRIZ (www.Trizjournal.com) or SCAMPER (Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Magnify, Put to Other Uses, Eliminate, Rearrange/Reverse) might appeal to those who prefer the Pilot and Inventor Talents. Individuals who favor the Diplomat and Poet talents might prefer working with focus groups or customers to get new ideas. Two books by Michael Michalko "Cracking Creativity" and "Thinkertoys" are excellent sources for different tool and techniques.

Q: I took a creativity test at one point and scored low. What does that say about your framework?

A: Before relying on the results of a "creativity test," you need to look at the underlying definition used in the test. Most such tests use a biased or exclusive definition (creativity might be defined as the ability to generate a high number of ideas, for example). Most such tests don't recognize individual differences in the form of creative results as the Breakthrough Creativity Profile does, so they really can't measure creativity as it's defined in the Breakthrough Creativity approach.

More productive for achieving all the professional and personal benefits of creativity than focusing on test scores is identifying your own creative talents, knowing how to use them to their best advantage, and figuring out which of the other talents you might need to develop to take your creative performance to the highest level possible.

Q. How does the right brain and left brain theory of creativity fit into this? ~Mary

A: My research into the current findings of neuroscientists reveals that we use our whole brain – not one side or the other -- to come up with new, different and useful ideas and to figure out what to do with them to get creative results. A [2012 post on my blog](#) speaks to some of the challenges of that theory.

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