



**The
Creativity
Issue**

orange

Issue Twelve

STRATEGY • CONTENT • DISTRIBUTION

orang
g

Cultivate Your Creativity

"I'm not really a creative person." "My mind doesn't work that way."

Whenever I hear that, I just shake my head. It's not true. Because—good news!—everyone has the potential to be more creative.

That's because creativity is more than being artistic or wildly imaginative. It's really about not accepting the status quo or doing the same thing over and over again. Truly creative people leave behind any preconceived notions and bring a fresh perspective to everything they do.

Sure, there are people who possess more talent in certain areas or have a natural inclination toward creative thinking. But that doesn't mean you—all of us, really—can't up your "C" game, no matter what it is you do for a living.

Learning to be more creative is just like learning any new activity or behavior. It takes time, and effort, and will seem incredibly awkward at first. But eventually, innovation starts to become second nature, and before long it will be an integral part of the way you think and everything you do.

In this issue of **orange**, we explore creativity from a number of different angles. Flip through the pages and you'll find resources to help you be more creative, ideas that hit it big (and some that didn't), and tips on how to avoid company cultures that stifle creativity. You'll also find provocative insights from recognized experts on topics related to the creative process, such as the role of creativity in a data-driven world, and how change can be a source of inspiration and innovation.

So the next time you find yourself in a creative rut, remember that creativity is as much of a learned behavior as it is a natural talent, and to get better you have to practice, practice, practice.

Bring it on.



Jim Meyers
President & CEO
Imagination
jmeyers@imaginepub.com

 @jmeyers



Features

12 Nature/Nurture

Is our talent for creativity hardwired in the brain at birth? Two cerebral experts face off on the age-old q.

16 Tech a Bow

Sidelined geeks no longer, tech companies are taking the creative lead in producing some of the most game-changing content programs out there.

24 Shock Treatment

Why you need more than free beer and napping pods to jump-start a culture of creativity at your organization.

30 Can Creativity Survive?

The internet is powered by algorithms that reward patterns. So how can the new thrive online, if search and AI prize what's already been done? We turn to digital futurist and renowned author Luke Dormehl for answers.

36 Decoding Creativity

What marketers say—and what they really mean.

Departments

1 Jim's Letter

Creativity: You either have it or you don't, right? Nope. Everyone can cultivate it.

4 Who's Inside

The movers, shakers and visionary brands name-checked in this issue spotlighting creativity.

6 Social Seen

A social media round-up of what #creativity means to intriguing notables we follow.

8 My Favorite Mistake

The Walking Dead's celebrated costumer Eulyn Colette Hufkie reveals the defining career misstep that propelled her forward.

10 Case Study

How one brand's creative thinking helped it score fans worldwide.

40 Big Data

What makes some of history's top creatives so special? We translate genius into digits.

42 Hit or Miss

We've got the scoop on which content marketing programs recently killed it. And which ones were DOA.

48 The List

10 essential online resources to help fire up your next big idea.

51 Book 'em

Looking for lit to inspire creativity? We have three faves. Find the one that's best for you.

52 Imagination Insights

Imagineers take a cue from haiku and define "creativity" in five words.

what's INSIDE

imagination. 600 W. Fulton St., 6th Floor, Chicago, IL 60661 • 312.887.1000 • www.imaginepub.com • **Founder & CEO** Jim Meyers, jmeyers@imaginepub.com • **Executive Vice President & Chief Content Officer** Kim Caviness, kcaviness@imaginepub.com • **Executive Vice President, Design & Brand** Doug Kelly, dkelly@imaginepub.com • **Executive Vice President, Client Strategy** Todd Cywinski, tcywinski@imaginepub.com • **Vice Presidents, Content** Maria Clark, mclark@imaginepub.com, Cyndee Miller, cmiller@imaginepub.com, Chris Blose, cblose@imaginepub.com • **Senior Vice President, Business Development** Erin Slater, eslater@imaginepub.com • **orange magazine** • **Senior Content Director** Matthew Wright, mwright@imaginepub.com • **Content Director** Libby Ellis, lellis@imaginepub.com • **Assistant Editor** Carly Hurwitz, churwitz@imaginepub.com • **Copy Editors** Becky Maughan, bmaughan@imaginepub.com, Kristen Menke, kmenke@imaginepub.com • **Design Director** Tiffany Toft, ttoft@imaginepub.com • **Contributors** Tessa D'Agosta, Jordan Berger, Kim Caviness, Abigail Covington, Megan Dawson, Libby Ellis, Debra Filcman, Kelley Hunsberger, Nick O'Mara, Margaret Poe, Rebecca Rolles, Lindsay Roseman, M. Cecilia Wong • **orange magazine** is a product of Imagination. • Copyright 2016 Imagination Publishing, LLC. All rights reserved. Cover Photo: Peopleimages.

Interested in learning more about how Imagination can help you achieve your content marketing objectives? Email Erin Slater, senior vice president of business development, at eslater@imaginepub.com.



who's inside

Death to Stock

SOCIAL SEEN

- Steve Cartwright, founder, website-designs.com
- Ije Nworie, CEO, Wolff Olins
- Emily Ross, director of marketing and communications, WhatClinic.com
- Nick Udall, CEO, Nowhere
- Bruce Springsteen, The Boss
- Kerry Butters, editorial and SEO director, markTwrite
- Martin Sorrell, founder and CEO, WPP
- Biz Stone, co-founder, Twitter
- Andreas von der Heydt, director, Kindle, Amazon
- Nick Bartle, VP, member marketing and communications, LinkedIn
- Tim Brown, CEO, IDEO

MY FAVORITE MISTAKE

- Eulyn Colette Hufkie, costume designer
- AMC series *The Walking Dead*
- Frank Darabont, screenwriter

CASE STUDY

- FIFA World Cup
- HCL Technologies
- Manchester United
- Jim Andrews, senior vice president, ESP Properties
- Matt Preschern, CMO, HCL Technologies

NATURE/NURTURE

- Kenneth M. Heilman, M.D., professor of neurology and health psychology, University of Florida

- Peter Gray, research professor, department of psychology at Boston University
- James M. Bradburne, architect, designer and museum specialist

TECH A BOW

- NASA
- SpaceX
- Gabe Weisert, managing editor, Zuora
- GE Reports, GE's daily online publication
- Tomas Kellner, managing editor, GE Reports
- *Wired*
- *Popular Science*
- Tien Tzuo, founder, Zuora
- Tumblr
- Periscope
- Facebook
- Beth Comstock, vice chair for innovation, GE
- *Subscribed Magazine*, published by Zuora
- *Adventures in Electricity* comic book
- *Time*
- *The Economist*
- Reddit

SHOCK TREATMENT

- Veronique Lafargue, global head of content strategy, Google Apps for Work
- *Fast Company*
- Amazon
- *The New York Times*
- Dale Alberda, principal, NBBJ
- Conversation
- BuzzFeed

CAN CREATIVITY SURVIVE?

- Luke Dormehl, tech journalist and author of *The Formula: How Algorithms Solve All Our Problems...and Create More and Thinking Machines: The Inside Story of Artificial Intelligence and Our Race to Build the Future*
- Alexis Kirke, award-winning filmmaker and composer
- Apple Music
- Steve Jobs
- Google
- Scripps Health
- Paul Virilio, cultural theorist

BIG DATA

- Richard Branson, entrepreneur
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, author
- Sigmund Freud, psychologist
- Steve Jobs, inventor
- Betsey Johnson, fashion designer
- John Legere, telecom exec
- David Lynch, director and screenwriter
- Joan Miró, artist
- Madonna, pop icon

HIT OR MISS

- Foursquare's Trump Business Tracker
- Hamburger Helper's *Watch the Stove*

- Cathay Pacific's *Nepal, One Year Later* from *The Atlantic*
- Etihad Airways' *Reimagine*
- Grey Goose's *Fly Beyond 2016*
- BarkBox's Instagram

THE LIST

- Brainsparker
- Behance
- Mural
- Coverjunkie
- Snapchat
- Hotjar
- Pottermore
- J.K. Rowling
- Swissmiss
- Tina Roth Eisenberg
- Noisli
- StoryCorps
- Humans of New York
- American Folklife Center

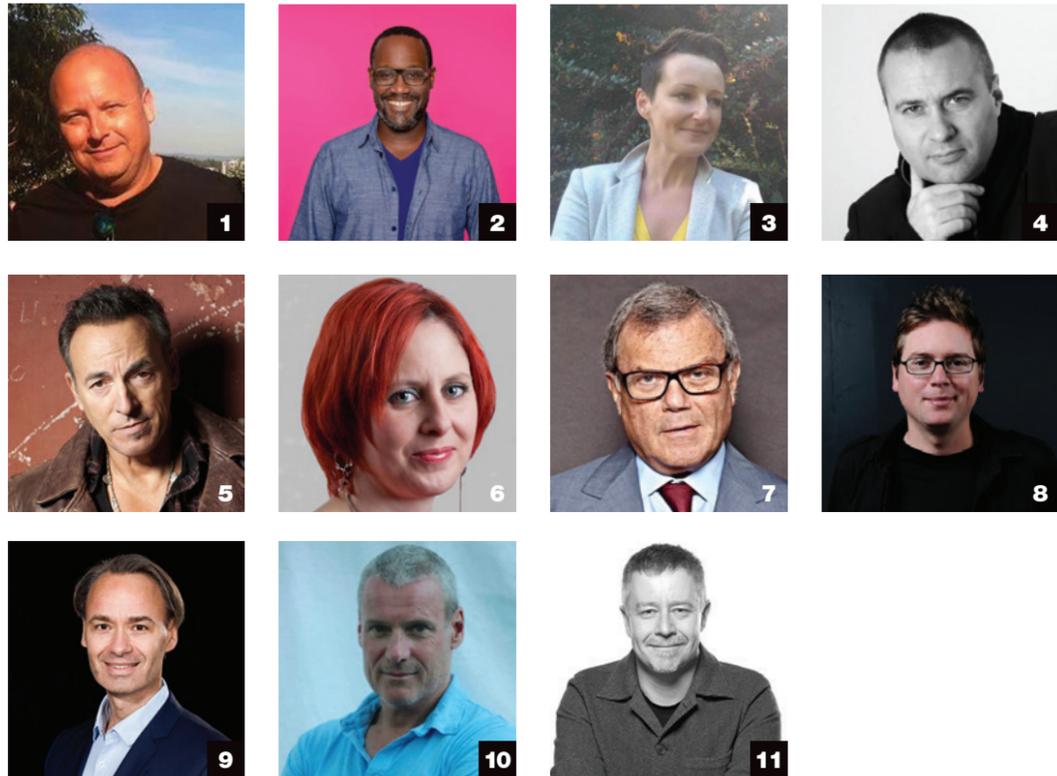
BOOK 'EM

- Eric Weiner, author of *The Geography of Genius: A Search for the World's Most Creative Places, From Ancient Athens to Silicon Valley*
- Tom Kelley and David Kelley, authors of *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All*
- Dave Trott, author of *One Plus One Equals Three: A Masterclass in Creative Thinking*

Crowdsourcing #Creativity

A social roundup of what the word means to notable doers and makers

BY JORDAN BERGER & DEBRA FILCMAN



1 “To be creative you have to be able to do two things: think and produce. Without the production part ... you’re just daydreaming.”

Steve Cartwright
Founder, website-designs.com

2 “[Creativity] is not obsessed with having all the answers itself, but in creating start points that get many involved scaling real change in a way that matters to us all.”

Ije Nwokorie
CEO, Wolff Olins

3 “No. 1: To do something with soul, creativity or love. No. 2: To put ‘something of yourself’ into what you’re doing.”

Emily Ross
Director of marketing and communications,
WhatClinic.com

4 “Creativity is the dance between the known and the unknown, the conscious and the unconscious, the visible and the invisible, the tangible and the intangible.”

Nick Udall
CEO, Nowhere

5 “It’s very similar to eating, in that there is a part of you that gets very uncomfortable. There has to be a part of you that is continuously uncomfortable with yourself.”

Bruce Springsteen
The Boss

6 “Creativity in marketing often separates the successful from the unsuccessful.”

Kerry Butters
Editorial and SEO director, markTwrite

7 “There is no business without it. Imagination, inventiveness, wit, ingenuity and talent are just as at home in media, PR, software development, data and research as they are in art and copy.”

Martin Sorrell
Founder and CEO, WPP

8 “Creativity is a renewable resource. Challenge yourself every day. Be as creative as you like, as often as you want, because you can never run out.”

Biz Stone
Co-founder, Twitter

9 “Reversing your assumptions broadens your thinking:

- State your challenge.
- List your assumptions.
- Challenge your (fundamental) assumptions.
- Reverse each assumption by writing down the opposite of each one.
- Record different viewpoints which might be useful.
- Evaluate how to accomplish each reversal. List as many ideas as you can.”

Andreas von der Heydt
Director, Kindle, Amazon

10 “To be creative in a data-driven culture, there has to be the acknowledgment of both art and science.”

Nick Bartle
VP, member marketing and communications, LinkedIn

11 “By embracing ambiguity, you’re saying to your team: Fog was in the forecast. Just stay focused, work together, and our final destination will soon come into sight.”

Tim Brown
CEO, IDEO

Why I Walked Away From TV's Most Popular Show

BY M. CECILIA WONG

For Eulyne Colette Hufkie, it's no guts, no glory—literally.

She spent five seasons dressing the living and the undead on the hit AMC series *The Walking Dead*. That rotting, gritty, thank-God-smell-o-vision-doesn't-exist look of the zombies? It's this costume designer's work—perfected through hours of poring over scripts, direction from writer Frank Darabont and the showrunners, and raw creativity for imagining a world that's a nightmare version of our own.

Because missteps are key to the process of creative mastery, we wanted to know, where—in the course of her career—she'd gone wrong. Her answer is surprising—though maybe not to any marketer who's ever stood ground on an idea considered dangerous or one rooted in long-term returns instead of short-term gratification. (Here's looking at you, content marketers who rush to tactics.) The trick to innovating in a creative industry might just be fear itself.

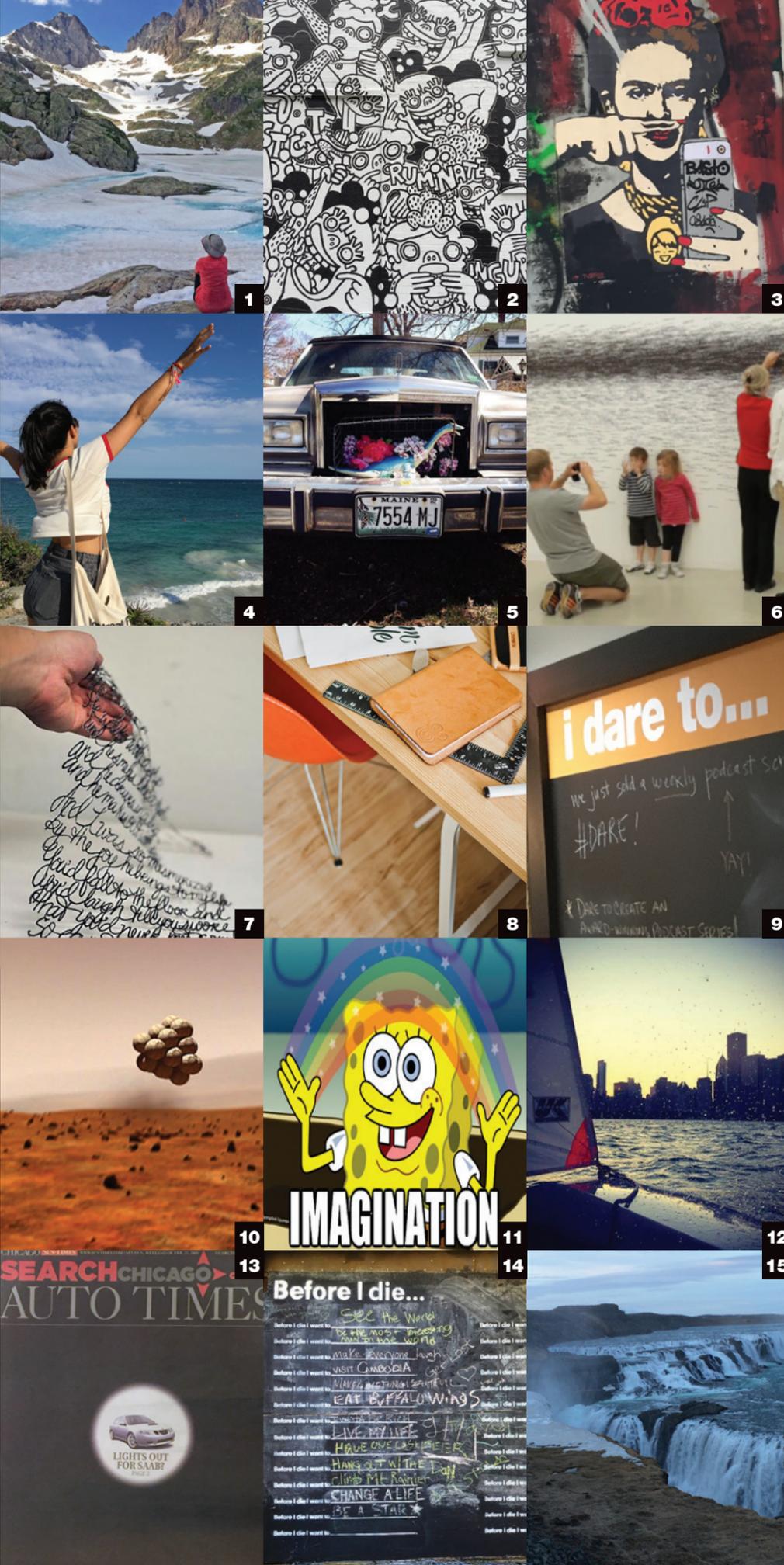
"It's not so much a major mistake as it is a hell of a risk. I just left *The Walking Dead* after six years. It was time—I had even designed a look for every group of survivors in the graphic novel. It's a hard act to follow, for sure. But for anyone working in the creative field, you have to know when to move on, be challenged, and feel that excitement and newness again. What you learn from taking a risk like that is leaning on the concept of being open to challenges with both humility and confidence."

In taking that hell of a risk, Hufkie may have sidestepped the biggest mistake: complacency.



Eulyne Colette Hufkie spent six gorily happy years costuming the undead on AMC's *The Walking Dead*.

Courtesy AMC



What Screams Creativity?

Our team collected images that blow their minds wide open

- 1) **Chris Blose**
Vice President, Content
- 2) **Matthew Wright**
Senior Content Director
- 3) **Cyndee Miller**
Vice President, Content
- 4) **Laura Yee**
Content Director
- 5) **Libby Ellis**
Content Director
- 6) **Alma Bahman**
Editor
- 7) **Julie Ortega**
Editor
- 8) **Liz Kalkowski**
Art Director
- 9) **Kim Caviness**
EVP, Chief Content Officer
- 10) **Hugo Espinoza**
Senior Art Director
- 11) **Matt Carey**
Staff Accountant
- 12) **Megan Dawson**
Associate Research Editor
- 13) **Chuck Ulie**
Financial Editor
- 14) **Marla Clark**
Vice President, Content
- 15) **Amy Fabbri**
Senior Program Director

Score!

6 ways a global partnership is changing the fan-experience game

BY REBECCA ROLFES

Yesterday's Game	Today's Game
1982	2014
FIFA World Cup	FIFA World Cup
Italy defeats Germany 3-1	Germany defeats Argentina 1-0
Total attendance: 2,109,723	Total attendance: 3,429,873
40,572 per match x 52 matches	53,592 per match x 64 matches
Online and mobile audience: 0	Online and mobile audience: 280 million

Talk about a big score.

In September 2015, the Indian software giant HCL Technologies announced a three-year sponsorship of Manchester United, the world's most-followed soccer team and, at \$1.2 billion, according to *Forbes*, one of the most valuable football brands. The deal costs HCL "eight figures annually," estimates Jim Andrews, senior vice president of ESP Properties, publisher of the industry bible, the *IEG Sponsorship Report*. "That's in cash and in-kind services."

The takeaway? Tech has made it possible for next-level fan worship. Here's why and how it works for HCL and Man United:

1. Geography matters no more.

Manchester United has more than 650 million fans, 99 percent of whom will never see a live game.

But that doesn't mean you can't foster a rabid fan base.

"You're no longer tied to the geography of who can buy tickets or even who can watch your terrestrial broadcast," Andrews says. "You can now connect with people who are thousands of miles away who consider themselves fans. That changes the commercial nature of what you can do with a sponsorship."

2. Tech becomes the centerpiece of super-fandom.

HCL is less interested in its logo on players' uniforms than most sponsors. What the company intends to do, according to Matt Preschern, CMO of HCL, is "explore current and future club use of technology to create a 21st-century, digitally enabled fan experience. What seems unusual now—using technology to enhance content and the fan experience—will actually be commonplace in a few years."

3. Scaling up will be difficult.

The company faces massive technical and technological challenges as it strives to reinvent sports viewing for the digital age. Those millions of fans are often in developing countries using a multitude of devices, platforms and service providers and connection speeds.

4. UX comes to the forefront.

HCL is opening a briefing center at Old Trafford, The Red Devils' home stadium. It "will use the eight logical and emotional experience nodes on which sports fan engagement works—immersion, engagement, social connection, play, pride, identification, mastery and advocacy—and will launch a slew of rapid innovations around fan win, fan follow and fan play," Preschern says. "The focus will be ensuring that 'feature rich' doesn't translate into 'experience poor,' which is a trap that many digital platforms fall into."

5. Low-tech pairs with high-tech.

Even as the lab onboards a series of experiments around "efficiency, effectiveness and differentiation," Preschern says, HCL will launch digital changes almost every week. Some of the ideas are fairly low tech: the ability to wish a favorite player a happy birthday, for instance. Some are more whiz-bang and, at this point, theoretical. "What if we were to take the player fitness and running-time data and put it in a wearable app?" Preschern asks. "Fans could see how they measured up in their workouts."

6. Data capture leads to personalization.

All of this will roll up into a new top-secret website and mobile app.

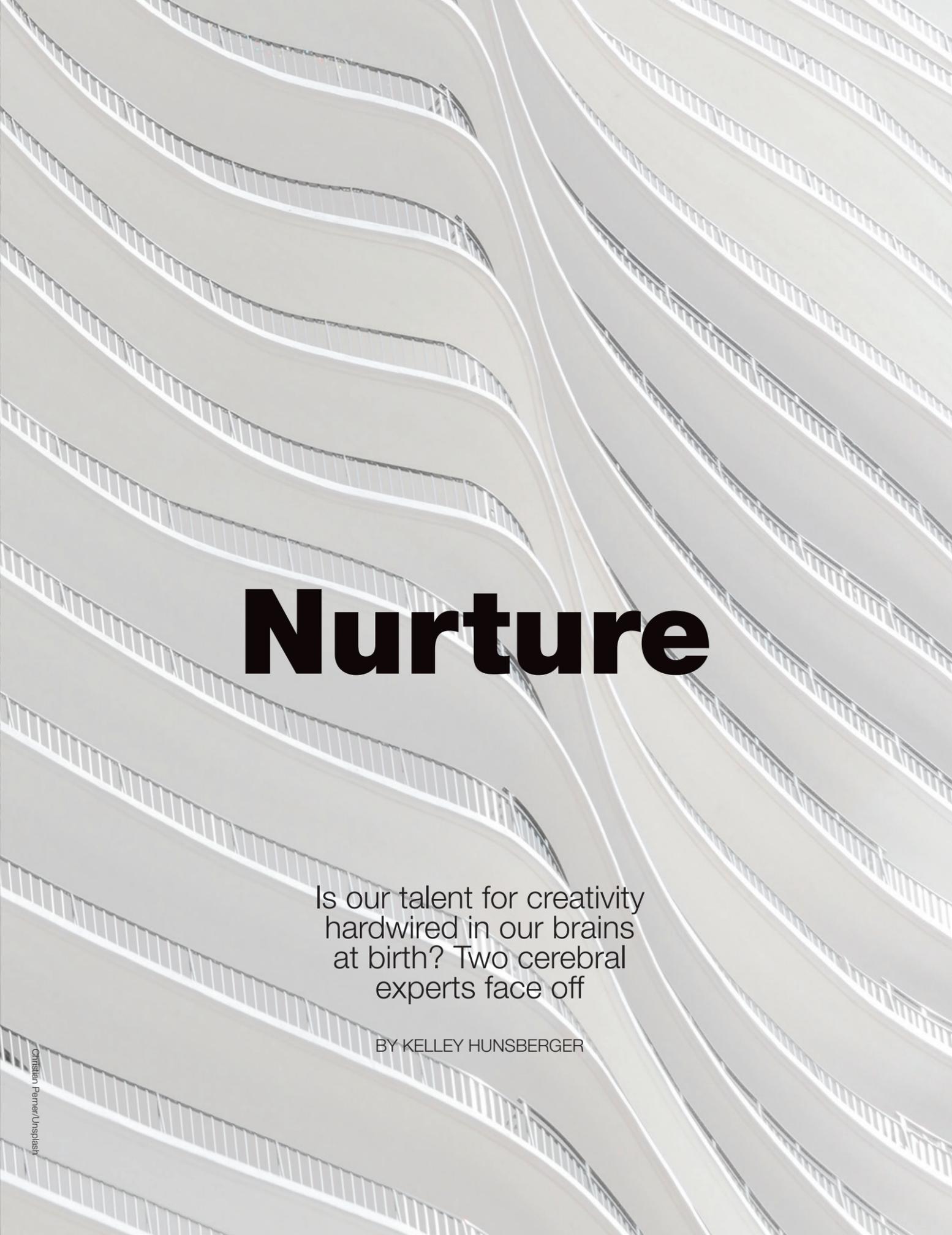
"There is not a major sports rights-holder today that is not talking about digital and data," Andrews says. "Right now those are the big buzzwords for sports marketing. What everyone is wondering is whether HCL can pull off the data play." But the ROI of this experiment will ultimately be determined by the answers to these questions: How much are 650 million fans worth? And how will they consume sports 10 years from now? HCL is suited up and storming the pitch.

flipfoto/Thinkstock



Nature

Thanapongphoto/Thinkstock



Nurture

Christian Perner/Unsplash

Is our talent for creativity
hardwired in our brains
at birth? Two cerebral
experts face off

BY KELLEY HUNSBERGER



“Nurture can actually change the structure of the brain.”

—Kenneth M. Heilman, M.D., professor of neurology and health psychology, University of Florida



“Creativity is ... part of being a human being. It can't be taught.”

—Peter Gray, research professor, Boston University

DEBATES ABOUT CREATIVITY RAGE ON AND ON.

Left brain versus right brain. Divine inspiration versus hard labor. And then there's the big daddy of them all: Is creativity a product of nature or nurture?

This is where people will be thrown down: David Bowie is a natural-born creative genius from the time he was a wee tyke named David Jones. Absolutely. But the environment he grew up in and the people he surrounded himself with probably also provided him with some creative fodder.

The reality is the answer may lie in the murky, messy middle. James M. Bradburne, a British-Canadian architect, designer and museum specialist, believes that creativity entirely depends upon circumstances. “It is not clear to me that creativity is innate, as it only emerges in specific contexts, and people can demonstrate surprising creativity when the situation calls for it,” he says. Which is why, given how many companies depend on creativity for a competitive edge, we gotta ask: nature or nurture?

Baby, I was born this way.

The amount to which our characteristics, skills, mental health, likes and dislikes are predetermined by birth is constantly up for debate. There are many who believe that genes play a big part in how creative we are.

Creative people often have a smaller corpus callosum (the band of nerves that connects the right and left hemispheres of the brain), says Kenneth M. Heilman, M.D., professor of neurology and health psychology at the University of Florida.

Creativity has three major stages, he says:

- 1) Preparation:** The development of critical knowledge and skills
- 2) Innovation:** The development of creative solutions
- 3) Creative production:** The output

Heilman and his colleagues argue that nature plays a significant part in the success of both the preparation and innovation phases. These require “a basic level of general intelligence and domain-specific knowledge and skills, and highly creative people may have anatomic alterations of specific neocortical regions.”

One of the first steps in creative thinking is divergent thinking, and both the right and left frontal lobes play a key role, Heilman adds.

Some see everyone starting out on equal footing in the nature department: Peter Gray, a

research professor in the department of psychology at Boston University, argues; “We are all really born creative. What little children do, everything they do, is creative. They are creating their understanding of the world. Creativity is just part of being a human being. It can't be taught. How could you teach it?”

The downside is that creativity can be drilled out of us—and that's exactly what today's schools are guilty of, Gray says.

“If you have to spend your time just doing what you're told to do and doing it in the way you're told to do it, that's of course the opposite of being creative,” he says. “And our schools today are more and more of that sort, even for little children. There's always a right answer as opposed to, ‘There's my view on it, there's your view on it.’”

This kind of restrictiveness is producing adults who are less creative than previous generations, Gray says. “The irony is, we're living in an age when creativity is even more important than it's been before. We don't need people who can do non-creative things.”

We've got computers and robots to do all the straightforward-type work, he says. But “we do need people who know how to ask new questions and answer questions that have never been answered, and see new ways of doing things and invent new machines, and create interesting things—whether they're novels or poems or artwork or music—that bring joy to people's lives.”

I'm creative by nurture.

Despite his research, Heilman isn't prepared to argue that creativity *completely* depends upon our brain physiology. Instead, he insists “to fully grow into its fully formed state, it needs to be encouraged. In fact, nurture can actually change the structure of the brain.”

Bradburne defines creativity as an ability to identify novel solutions in a setting that has specific constraints. “What we call creativity means a willingness to take risks, challenge existing practices and test—even when common sense suggests undesirable outcomes. Creativity often involves being able to identify possible utility where others see failure.”

Sometimes our best intentions actually hamper creativity, Gray says.

“If nurturing means, ‘I'm going to praise my child when he or she does something creative,’ that takes the creativity out of it,” he explains. The child does it for praise, instead of for fun or the act of developing something he or she finds interesting.

Don't encourage creativity at all, Gray argues. “The best way to nurture creativity is to give children lots of time for free play.”

The same is true for your teams.

As with most debates worth having, there's no easy answer to the question of where creativity comes from. But that doesn't stop us from asking the next big question: Where can creativity take us? ■

Kenneth M. Heilman, M.D., is the James E. Rooks, Jr. Distinguished Professor of Neurology at the University of Florida. He is the author/editor of 16 books, more than 100 chapters, and over 600 journal publications where he and his co-workers described several new diseases/disorders and their treatment, as well as helped to better understand the pathophysiology and treatment of many neurobehavioral disorders.

Peter Gray is a research professor of psychology at Boston College. He is the author of Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life.

**Call it
revenge of the
nerds. When
it comes to
creating ground-
breaking content,
it's time to
listen to the
smartest people
in the room**



Tech and

**BY
REBECCA
ROLFES**

Nick Karvounis/Unsplash



T

his should come as

no surprise: Tech companies are really good at innovation. Until not so long ago, however, all that creativity went into their products, while their content marketing primarily consisted of nerds talking to nerds in acronym-filled geekspeak.

But then tech culture invaded the mainstream. Nerds became the cool kids. They decided to out-NASA NASA, reinvented the automotive industry and up-ended how the entire world communicates.

Technology isn't inaccessible, or boring, anymore. Some tech companies, like SpaceX, recognize tech's cultural cache and started innovating with their content—and nerds and non-nerds alike are eating it up.

Not every tech company got the tweet, though. There's still a lot of very bad, very PR, very wonky tech content out there. The same can be said for a lot of business content in general, of course. Many—maybe most—tech companies don't pay enough attention to what's trending from their competitors' content and why. There are still companies that want to talk about what they think makes them sound interesting instead of what readers actually *find* interesting.

Death to Stock



curly

“Marketing has a marketing problem. Marketers spend time churning out content they wouldn’t spend 10 seconds reading themselves. You have to apply the BS barometer to your content.”

—Gabe Weisert, managing editor, Zuora

Tech powerhouses Zuora and GE are pioneering content marketing with their award-winning *Subscribed Magazine* and GE Reports.



“Marketing has a marketing problem,” says Gabe Weisert, managing editor at Zuora, a fintech software company. “Marketers spend time churning out content they wouldn’t spend 10 seconds reading themselves. You have to apply the BS barometer to your content.”

Tech companies as creative about their content as their products have several things in common—and much to teach all content marketers.

1. Look beyond the usual suspects.

Tech content used to be aimed at engineers, but at GE Reports, the 124-year-old corporation’s daily online publication, there are multiple audiences, according to managing editor Tomas Kellner.

He positions GE Reports as a science, technology and innovation magazine of the same caliber as *Wired* or *Popular Science*. As such, engineers are only one part of the readership. Investors, customers and just regular folks are target audiences, too.

“I want to write stories that resonate with people who have nothing to do with GE, who don’t work here, don’t own stock,” Kellner says. Seeing audience as one wellspring of creativity means tying your content into the larger economy, according to Weisert. “The new subscription economy is based on outcomes, not assets,” he says. “That gives us a license to talk about a lot of things.”

GE, for its part, is undergoing one of the largest business transformations in history. It no longer makes light bulbs or washing machines. Once one of the largest banks in the country, it has exited the financial services business.

Instead, it wants to be the “world’s largest digital industrial company,” Kellner says. That means mirroring a strategy pursued by Apple, Google and most of the diversified technology companies out there. “It’s the zeitgeist right now: artificial intelligence, data analysis,” he adds. “We are just like the companies we serve—complex, knowledge-driven. The story of that transformation is worth telling.”

2. Tell the story no one else can tell.

Kellner and a former colleague created a storytelling workshop for employees at GE, particularly those in PR. He still writes about 60 percent of the stories that run on the site and uses a stable of well-respected freelancers, but “nothing makes me happier than running one of my students’ bylines. This isn’t rocket science. It’s Storytelling 101.”

Hannah Weil/Unsplash



“GE scientists are working on the frontiers of knowledge, and I have a front-row seat. ... The story of that transformation is worth telling.”

—Tomas Kellner, managing editor, GE Reports

Kellner’s storytelling model is tried and true: Find a protagonist, present the challenge he or she has (or hasn’t) overcome, talk about the result. The fact that his protagonists are developing revolutionary approaches to CT scans and new skins for airplanes and way cool robots makes finding the kernel of a great story easier. But Kellner doesn’t stop there—he digs deep. Instead of saying, “Our robots are way cool,” he’ll run a story about whether robots will create more social inequality. Still, Kellner’s not expecting to win any Pulitzer Prizes. At least not yet. “I’m honest about that,” he says. For him, it’s about creating content that’s “informative—that gives people ideas, how to live smarter, how to make better decisions—relevant, timely.”

But who says a company can’t break a big story? “GE scientists are working on the frontiers of knowledge, and I have a front-row seat,” Kellner says.

And these are not stories you’re going to read anywhere else. You certainly won’t find any of them in a GE press release. That means tech geeks aren’t the only readers gobbling this stuff up. The site can attract 300,000 people a month, almost all through organic search.

3. Start with why and how. Not what.

The newspaper business model was to create great content that attracted an audience, and then sell access to that audience via advertising. The money wasn’t in the content but in those who read it. Still true, as it happens.

What some content marketers gloss over is that if the content isn’t worth reading, there won’t be an audience. Especially in the age of the self-generated distribution channel, KPIs won’t be met and below-the-line sales won’t happen.

Weisert describes his ultimate job as moving readers into the “third room”—a vision Zuora founder Tien Tzuo brought with him after leaving Salesforce.com.

“We start with the why, room one,” Weisert says. “Then the how: what does this mean to you?—room two. Only then do we move into the what—room three, the product. The mistake companies make is jumping straight to the third room.”

The third room is where a separate, more technical, content team takes over, a team that lives in sales rather than marketing. And its job is to monetize the audience its content marketing colleagues have created.

Tim Gawn/Unsplash

4. Give permission to experiment fast—and to fail.

When it comes to established corporate marketing tools—white papers, case studies, e-books—things can get territorial and political. Those become fixed pillars not to be tampered or done away with, the antithesis of what’s necessary for ground-breaking thought.

“At GE, there is a tremendous amount of freedom and creativity,” Kellner says. “There’s this concept of fail fast within the company. It’s true. I’ve seen it. I don’t want it to sound like I’ve drunk the corporate Kool-Aid.”

He tried Tumblr because of the large-format images and ease of layout but gave it up in favor of a larger platform that allowed him to add an opinion page for comments from outside the company. And while he was enthusiastic about Periscope, he thinks that instant video on Facebook will be more powerful—and that’s just fine with The Powers That Be. “No one’s going to yell at me for dropping Periscope and going with Facebook,” he says.

It helps when you have friends in high places. Beth Comstock, GE’s vice chair for innovation, is “the patron saint over all these projects,” Kellner says. “Her leadership and her thinking—she gives us the cover to do this—allows us to go out there and try new things.”

At Zuora, Weisert has been given free rein to create a podcast series where less than half the content is about the company. He also launched a biannual perfect-bound print piece, *Subscribed Magazine*, last year. “Print is coming back,” he says. Sure, it’s costly to produce but “it’s an amazing, magical feeling, almost like a luxury product now.” There are already plans to take it quarterly.

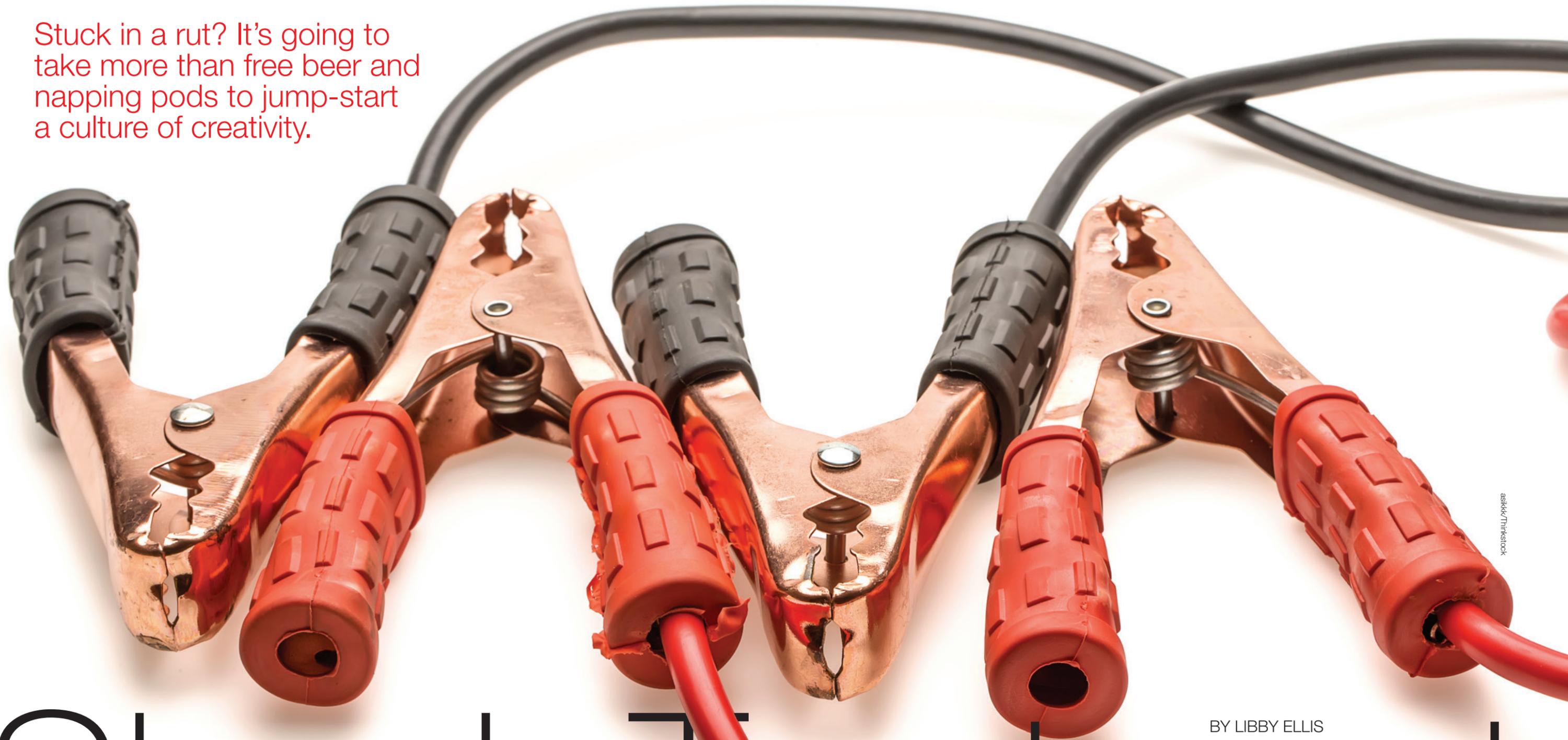
And GE has put its classic 1950s comic books, like *Adventures in Electricity*, on Wattpad to inspire user-generated sci-fi stories.

The willingness to fail ultimately means that these creative efforts can get off the ground in the first place. GE Reports’ popularity on platforms like Reddit, the fact that its stories are picked up by everyone from *Time* to *The Economist*, have greased the skids on manuscript approval, often through multiple rounds of legal and compliance.

“Some stories have been killed,” Kellner says. “Some come back with changes. But as long as it’s a good story that is true, I can run with it.”

Other industries better watch out—or the geeks just might inherit the earth. ■

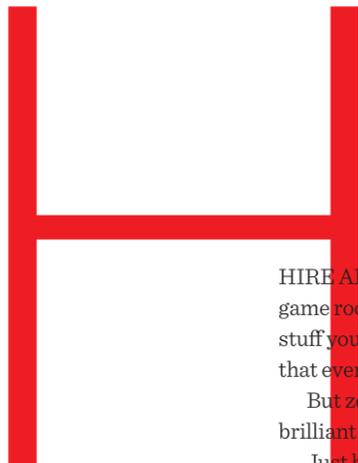
Stuck in a rut? It's going to take more than free beer and napping pods to jump-start a culture of creativity.



asikk/Thinkstock

Shock Treatment

BY LIBBY ELLIS



HIRE AN ON-SITE MEDITATION GURU. Build a game room. Offer kombucha on tap. It sounds like the stuff you need to foster that bleeding-edge thinking that every company's after.

But zeitgeisty perks don't necessarily translate to brilliant ideas.

Just below that veneer of cool is likely a teeming mass of creativity killers, things that have become so ingrained in corporate cultures that you probably don't even think about them.

It's OK. It happens to the best of us. Take a breath. Then, take a cold, hard look at what you're doing to inspire creativity—and toss whatever's not working. Fear not, we've got alternatives for you to try out:

Brainstorm with impunity—and structure. Yes, it's possible.

Brainstorms: the cradle of creativity! In a dream world, brainstorming goes like this: "What if we delivered the print magazine by drone and put a live feed of its flight on social?" High fives all around. No one worries who had the idea. No one looks at anyone like they're stupid. People ask smart, logistical questions. They poke holes. Everyone chimes in, and the idea morphs into something truly innovative.

In reality, this is what happens in most brainstorming sessions: People sabotage their own ideas saying things like, "This might be dumb, but..." They shoot down other people's ideas. They're not sure what the strategic objective is, so they use the time to answer emails. The loudest person dominates the conversation.

Brainstorming sessions need structure and a *raison d'être*. We all know we have too many of them, and a lot (if not most) of them are a massive waste of time and money. For a quick gauge on the heavy cost, multiply the number of attendees by their hourly wage and then multiply that by the number of hours the meeting lasts. Scary stuff.

We all know the basics: plan ahead, listen, stay on strategy. At Google, brainstorming is the basics times 10. Veronique Lafargue, global head of content strategy at Google Apps for Work, broke down the company's process like this: Get to really, really know the user. Then, and only then, can you let the ideation begin.



"Now that you're armed with information to base your brainstorm around, you can get down to thinking—but not just any thinking," she recently wrote in *Fast Company*. It's time to think 10X, improving something by 10 times, not 10 percent. And here's the make-or-break part of what Lafargue believes: You need to take action, which does not mean scheduling another meeting to discuss the idea to death.

Cut 'em some slack.

We can see the eyes rolling. Granted, this is some seriously dangerous terrain, rife with the opportunity for abuse. We've all sat working away while the person next to us indulges in a daylong bender checking out shoes or the best rooftop bars. Meanwhile, deadlines loom, so we plow through, oblivious that stopping to watch that delightful video of goat babies in PJs might actually inspire some new way of thinking.

asikk/Thinkstock

Deadlines loom, so we plow through, oblivious that stopping to watch that delightful video of goat babies in PJs might actually inspire some new way of thinking.



If they don't conflict with deadlines, side gigs are generally a good thing and recommended for rounding out employees' full range of creativity, but what happens at work belongs to work.

There are some fresh takes on breaks out there. And at least one innovator might surprise you: retail monster Amazon, hardly known for coddling its people. We all devoured *The New York Times* exposing its sink-or-swim culture: People are encouraged to tear apart one another's ideas, they are held to standards the company brags about as "unreasonably high" and they get direction on how to send secret feedback to one another's bosses.

Now the company is trying something positive and new: building three spherical high-tech greenhouses in its new downtown Seattle campus, the centerpieces of a \$4 billion renovation project for its headquarters. "The whole idea was to get people to think more creatively, maybe come up with a new idea they wouldn't have if they were just in their office," Dale Alberda, the lead architect on the project at NBBJ told *The New York Times*.

The real question is: Will employees actually leave their desks to breathe in nature and breathe out creativity, or will they be too worried that someone will ping the boss? Remains to be seen.

At NYC-based marketing and advertising agency Conversation, everyone ditches their phones and shuts down email the first Monday of every month.

Instead of the usual grind, they spend the whole day devoted to innovation.

Sometimes it's to beef up their creativity on pitches. A company blog post provides an example: "I'll ask an employee her favorite food—OK, salad. I'll ask another what he did last night—watched football. Then we create a 30-second spot for Kleenex, involving salad and football." Still skeptical? The company reports the time has helped employees conjure up fresh takes on status meetings and work processes.

Be worthy of their best ideas.

Done right, a creative culture will spark loads of ideas. Some of your employees may decide to pour some of that dazzling thinking into side gigs, weekend projects or even parlay it into making their next big move. How

do you stake claim to their best ideas 9-to-5?

Maddeningly addictive content company BuzzFeed requires two things: that it retain ownership of anything its employees develop and that employees work for BuzzFeed exclusively. In exchange, the company invests heavily in training and equipment, and lets staffers take risks and try new things.

But sometimes that love just ain't enough. In June, two high performers were fired for side work, and a recent article in *New York* made the point that younger workers aren't always down with a non-compete. BuzzFeed may be the outlier now, but any company pushing its employees to be more creative is going to have to navigate who controls those ensuing brilliant thoughts.

Our take? If they don't conflict with deadlines, side gigs are generally a good thing and recommended for rounding out employees' full range of creativity. But what happens at work belongs to work. Meaning: The company retains ownership rights. After all, you paid for their time and the tools they used to innovate.

Assign KPIs to creativity.

Just coming up with a wildly creative idea doesn't cut it. The idea has to move the needle. And while the authors of a 2016 survey by PwC admit most companies have not yet "cracked the code" for measuring innovation, over half of CEOs questioned cited the need.

Sure, creativity is subjective. But, like everything, there are ways to look at your culture and determine how to define creative success. Is it the number of brainstorming sessions you have? The number of seemingly out-there ideas clients actually buy? The organic growth driven by recommendations to new departments at your current clients? Start seeing creativity as something tangible, and it will grow.

No doubt, perks can up your company cred. But full-on, unbridled creativity demands some serious organizational change. There's bound to be culture shock. Things will work. Things won't. That's just part of the creative process.

If you craft the right culture, people will be creative, deliver results and happily hire their own meditation guru. ■

dismic/Thinkstock

The internet is powered by algorithms that reward patterns. So how can creativity hope to thrive online? We turn to tech expert, renowned author and digital futurist Luke Dormehl for answers.

BY KIM CAVINESS

CAN CREATIVITY SURVIVE?

THE HOLIEST OF GRAILS at any content conference in recent history has been how to produce content that's "data-driven" and "to scale."

But The Stream's mobile-driven clutter and speed have shifted our focus and content consumption. Quicker than you can say "backlash," content marketers started buzzing about producing less. Making each piece count more. Producing higher-quality content. More useful. And more creative so that content actually stops people and connects—meaningfully.

Even if you produce the most wildly innovative content, it still needs to be *found*. And this is where it gets tricky. Discovery relies on search, and search relies on algorithms recognizing patterns. In other words, tomorrow is found by yesterday. So, how can creativity win in a world refereed by pattern-seeking algorithms? And what are the content creation and consumption implications of the rise of AI and thinking machines?

That's what we asked Luke Dormehl, technology prognosticator, author of *The Formula: How Algorithms Solve All Our Problems ... and Create More* and *Thinking Machines: The Inside Story of Artificial Intelligence and Our Race to Build the Future* (released in the U.K. in August; U.S. edition coming March 2017) and contributor to *Wired* and *Fast Company*. Dormehl analyzes the complex relationship between creativity and algorithms, and creativity and AI—and where it's all going next.

Q: What is the relationship between truly unique creative content and algorithms? Is there a downside in search for being too innovative?

A: If you're talking specifically about search then, yes, right now it's an imperative that you create content that is categorizable in a way that makes it easier to find. But creative content shouldn't be governed by algorithms. True artists find patterns and then break them—they don't find a way to work within them.

Search algorithms are constantly getting smarter. Through fields like deep learning, one of the most exciting subfields of AI, we're now seeing innovations like the ability to search video by looking for individual images or sound bites. These things are only going to get more powerful, and better at searching, over the coming years. There's too much content

online that's similar as it is: Concentrate on creating unique material and let the algorithms catch you, not the other way around.

Q: Is there a way to use algorithms to our advantage?

A: If we broaden the topic beyond search, I think algorithms can help create truly creative content. There are lots of artists and creators working with algorithms right now. For instance, [award-winning filmmaker and composer] Alexis Kirke has created a movie that algorithmically changes direction based on the responses of whoever is watching it: choosing different scenes according to their emotional and physical responses. That's amazing stuff.

There's a temptation to view algorithms as the opposite of creativity. I don't believe that's the case.

Q: How do you think algorithms will evolve to respond to innovative content formats and topics? What about the semantic web—where digital systems "learn" to get more intuitive about what we are searching for and what we actually mean when we type a search query?

A: The big challenge with search as a whole is the idea of the "filter bubble": the notion that personalized search is always the best answer. In some ways, it is. If Google knows where I live and what I've historically shown myself to be interested in, it can present information I'm more likely to enjoy. The same is true of Amazon's recommender systems. We fight against these things because we like to think of ourselves as unique and uncategorizable, but the truth is that it's amazing how often machines can guess right—often with only a few data points.

So what's the problem? Mainly that we should get challenged. It's how we evolve into, we hope, enlightened, empathetic people. That's certainly true when it comes to finding creative content. Imagine if the kind of songs you liked at 10 were the only kind you'd ever been exposed to because that's all your personal recommender systems assumed you were interested in.

The key to truly intelligent search engines—and this speaks to your point about the semantic web—is that it contains results it thinks we'll like, but also opens us up to perspectives we might not previously have been exposed to. Search shouldn't be an echo

chamber, and that's as true for discovering new music or novels as it is regarding opinions on news topics.

Q: What's your POV on how we will consume content in the future?

A: So this is the question where I prove myself to be an idiot to anyone reading this five years down the line! The amazing thing about this question is that it speaks to how fundamentally unpredictable technology trends can be.

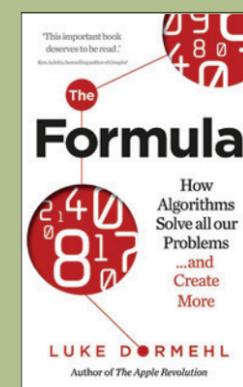
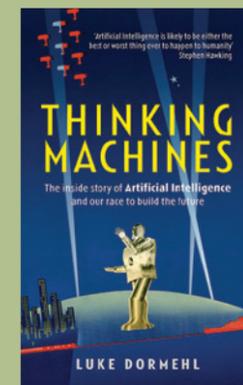
Five years ago, when every company was focused on building algorithms to recommend music to us, who could have predicted that Apple—the world's biggest tech company—would have human curators for its Apple Music service? Who could have predicted in a world of 140-character tweets that long-form content would make a comeback?

If your question is on what *devices* we'll consume media, then the answer is that more and more will take place on our smartphones. If the answer is about the *form* that that media will take, whether short videos, sprawling albums or online novels, I'd have to suggest that it will be all of the above. The great thing about the spread of the internet is that it has made niches viable: Whatever form you want to take as a creator, it's easier to find an audience than ever before.

Q: How will journalism monetize itself?

A: I think Steve Jobs realized something very valuable when he set up iTunes back in the early 2000s. At the time, Napster and other free music services were dominant, and it seemed there was no way to return to a paying model. He showed that if you provide users with a good enough user experience, they will pay. Perhaps you'll have to rethink how that payment works—selling music by the track instead of by the album, for example—but they'll still pay. So I think that if you can provide a good enough service, catering perhaps to a niche audience, you can make money through subscription-based services.

At the same time, there will be ad-supported news sites. Yes, a lot of them are suffering right now thanks to ad blockers. But there's so much money in advertising—it's how Google brings in the vast majority of its revenue—that there's a vested interest in finding a way to make it better in terms of how to target users with ads and in what form to present them.



"There's plenty that AI in particular is going to impact in the coming years: practical areas like employment, but also more existential questions like the role that we as people have to play in a world where so much of what we do—and how we have defined ourselves as humans—can be replicated by a machine."



Death to Stock

Q: What inspired you to write *Thinking Machines* and what's the guiding question you're exploring in your new book?

A: *The Formula* was my attempt to look at what algorithms are doing to the world: creatively, socially, politically and so on. *Thinking Machines* is, in some ways, a more straightforward book. It's a guide to artificial intelligence and a look at how it's changed over the years. Not only the transition from good old-fashioned symbolic AI to today's deep learning neural networks, but also in terms of the mission statement. In 2016, there are so many different areas of artificial intelligence: smart AI assistants, the Internet of Things, philosophical questions about the future of employment and humanity and so on. I wanted to write a book that would dive in and present a, hopefully, accessible primer on where AI has been—and where it's going next.

Q: What's the most surprising aspect of AI?

A: The part I got most excited about was the concept of smart connected devices. While some of it is consumer-facing (for example, your smart TV being able to recommend appropriate programs in the evening based on data received from your sleep-tracking wearable devices), some of it has much more profound potential—like a smart home for elderly people with dementia that could enable them to live better, more independent lives. I find that fascinating.

Also the idea of AI assistants and their future, presenting all manner of possibilities for reshaping politics, health care and so on. Most amazing of all is the fact that, in many cases, this technology isn't some far-flung future tech: It's already here!

Q: Can you paint a picture of what our daily lives will be like in the future, thanks to these thinking machines?

A: If you look back at the birth of AI, we always assumed we'd be surrounded by enormous robots and high tech would be incredibly visible in our lives. In fact, the opposite is likely to happen: Devices will get smaller and smarter, enabling us to hand over more and more work to them while having more time to, well, live.

One example is the extraordinary work companies like Google are doing with smart devices like its proposed contact lenses, able to measure the glucose levels in a wearer's tears and then transmit this information wirelessly to a connected smartphone. In the process, Google hopes to remove the need for diabetics to perform regular, often painful blood tests.

On an even smaller scale, another company, Scripps Health, is working to develop a nanosensor that users can inject into their bloodstream. Once there, it will nestle into the body's capillary beds that supply blood to the body's various organs, picking up relevant readings to transmit back to a master device for analysis. Users won't even have to worry about how the sensor is powered, since it has the ability to act as a mini hydroelectric dam by using the force of the blood that passes by.

Both of these will draw on AI technologies to let us know when we need to see a doctor, for instance, but we won't have to monitor them the whole time. That's the real promise of AI: making our lives easier—whether it's smart homes or smart medicine. Of course there are challenges presented, but I feel that thinking machines have the opportunity to be an enormous net-positive for humankind.

Q: What worries you most about our future? What excites you most?

A: It may be a cop-out answer, but the truth is that it's often the same things that excite me that also concern me. I open *The Formula* with a quote from Paul Virilio, the cultural theorist, who said that the inventor of the ship is also the inventor of the shipwreck. We can, of course, reverse this and say that the inventor of the shipwreck also invents the ship. There's plenty that AI in particular is going to impact in the coming years: practical areas like employment, but also more existential questions like the role that we as people have to play in a world where so much of what we do—and how we have defined ourselves as humans—can be replicated by a machine. In short, what happens when we're not the only "thinking machines"? Change is a scary thing, but it's also a source of excitement for creatives.

Q: Are you an optimist or a pessimist?

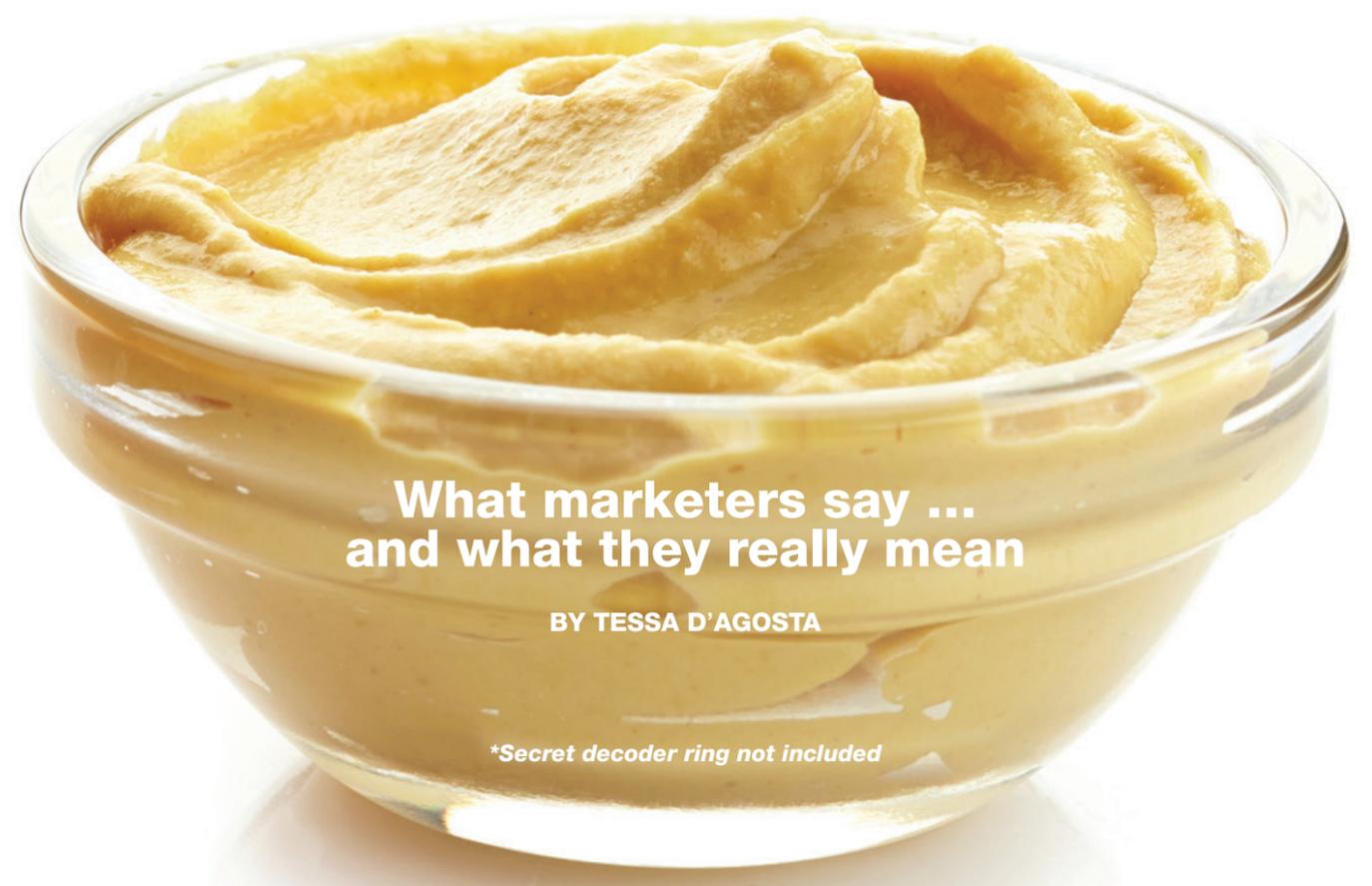
A: I'm a bit of both. Technologists love to build a grand narrative of what they're doing: Google's not just a company that has built a search engine; it's a utopian/dystopian organization aiming to take the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. There's a lot to be excited about and a lot to be worried about.

Q: It's 2020. Imagine a provocative article headline you're pitching to *Fast Company*.

A: "Do You Remember When the Best Artists Were Human?" ■



Decoding Creativity



What marketers say ... and what they really mean

BY TESSA D'AGOSTA

**Secret decoder ring not included*

Magnum/Thinkstock



Trying to decode what most marketers mean when they ask for creativity can feel like a wild goose chase—if the goose was greased up and the person really only wanted chicken in the first place.

The Ask: We need more diversity in photos.

The Meaning: This website is too male and too white—and maybe reflects our brand too accurately.

The Ask: Let's get a little crazy with our art.

The Meaning: Use the occasional illustration, but please stick to safe stock art images.

The Ask: I know what I like when I see it.

The Meaning: I have no idea what I like, but please do more work trying to guess.

The Ask: Give me less vanilla.

The Meaning: See how far you can go without offending a single person from any race, religion, ethnicity, culture or age.

The Ask: Be edgy.

The Meaning: Include a picture of someone with a tattoo.

The Ask: Let's try it. There's no such thing as a bad idea.

The Meaning: There are plenty of ideas we'll never use.

Nick M. Dav/Getty

The Ask: Think outside the box.

The Meaning: Think inside the box.

The Ask: Think really big.

The Meaning: Sure we want to see cooler decks, but we have no intention of straying from our comfort zone or increasing the budget.

The Ask: Can you punch up the headline?

The Meaning: Come up with five fun puns. Now, delete four. Make sure the fifth is SEO-friendly.

The Ask: Make this an interactive infographic.

The Meaning: Find a way to make people feel emotionally attached to this pie chart.

The Ask: I want this to go viral.

The Meaning: I want to win the popularity contest, and I've stopped thinking about my target audience or KPIs.

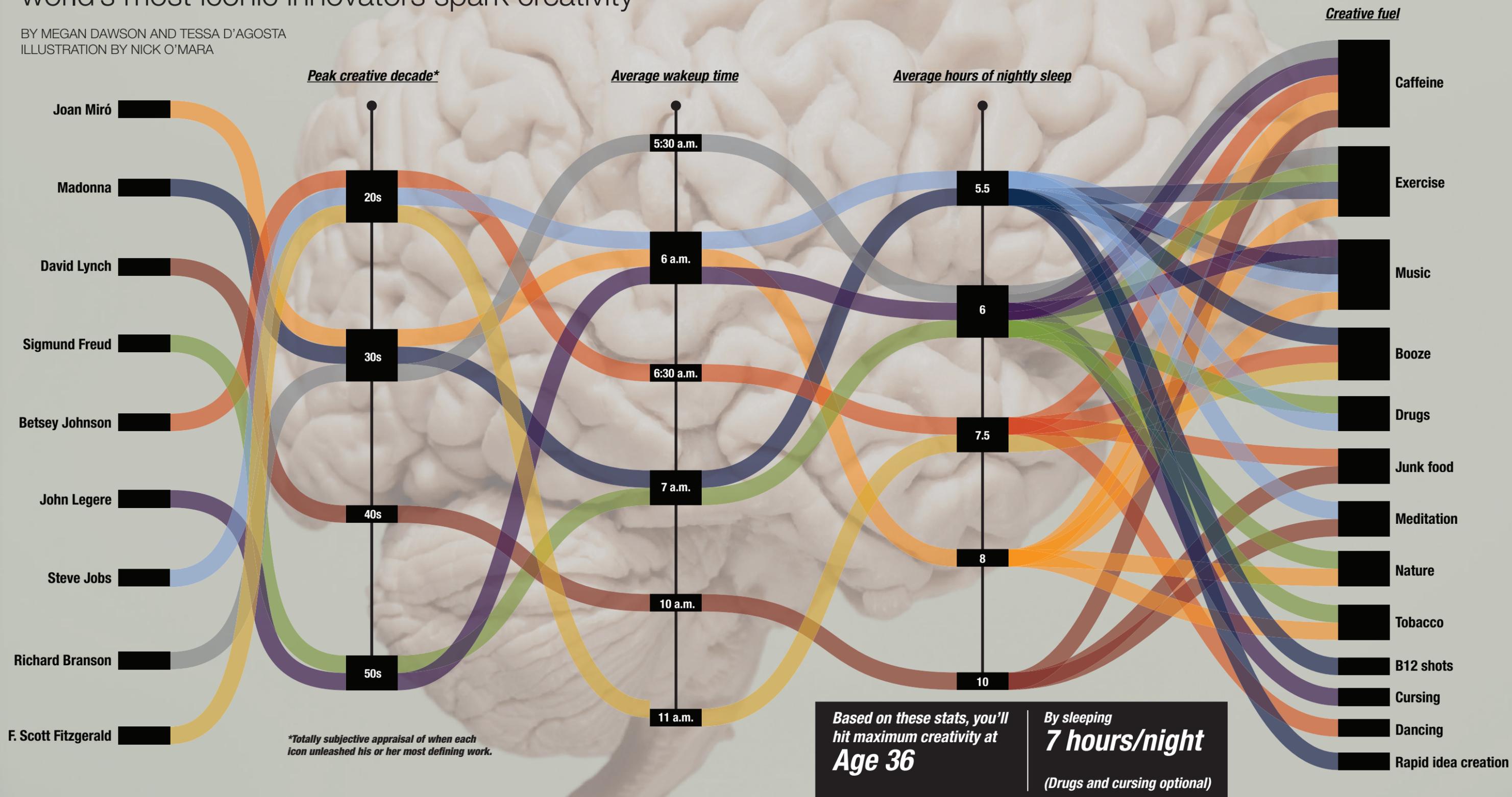
The Ask: This looks great, but can you make it "pop" somehow?

The Meaning: I've got this really awesome vision involving kaleidoscopes and the American Dream. Can you translate that into something cohesive and appealing?

Mapping Genius

We run the numbers to chart how some of the world's most iconic innovators spark creativity

BY MEGAN DAWSON AND TESSA D'AGOSTA
ILLUSTRATION BY NICK O'MARA



hit or miss



In the push for creativity, some brands reached the bleeding edge, while others just bled out

BY ABIGAIL COVINGTON

What do dogs, travel and vodka have in common? They tend to make people really happy.

But, boozy aspirations and cuddly products don't guarantee killer content.

Here are three brands that made us pay attention—and three that left us wanting more (or less).

bergamont/Thinkstock

Foursquare [Follow](#)
 Foursquare helps you find places you'll love, anywhere in the world. Questions? Tweet @f4sqSupport.
 Aug 4 · 6 min read

How the Trump Presidential Campaign is Affecting Trump Businesses

At Foursquare, our data scientists are often called upon to analyze real world trends; we use Big Data to determine how commercial fortunes are rising or falling. This year, politics and business are intersecting, as one of the presidential candidates, Donald Trump, has extensive properties including casinos, hotels, and golf courses. **Has his campaign been good for Trump-branded business?**

We have experience tackling these types of questions with a high degree of accuracy. Based on our foot traffic intelligence covering over 50 million users a month, we predicted Apple **iPhone 6s** sales, a hit Q4 for **McDonald's all-day breakfast**, and a tough Q1 for **Chipotle**. Time and again, our predictions have been proven on-target once these companies announced their earnings.

Reporters have lately been asking us if our foot traffic data can shed light on visits to Trump properties, so we decided to take a closer look. To be clear, as a technology company, we're not in the game of taking a stance on political questions. But we are interested in the power of data to illuminate cultural trends. So let's look at the numbers.

Have The Donald's politics trumped Trump businesses?

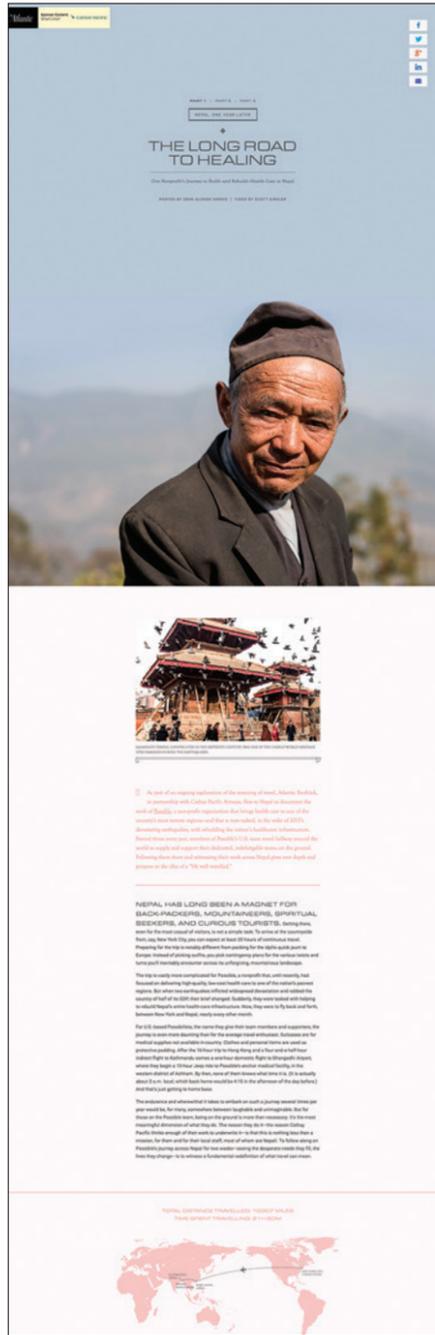
It turns out the data is fairly clear: **Since Donald Trump announced his candidacy in June 2015, foot traffic to Trump-branded hotels, casinos and golf courses in the U.S. has been down. Since spring, it's fallen more. In July, Trump properties' share of visits fell 14% year over year, for instance.**

There has been an interesting arc over the last year. Before Trump announced his presidential bid, foot traffic to his properties was steady year-

Foursquare's Trump Business Tracker
Has Donald Trump's presidential campaign been good for business? That sounds like a question only Nate Silver could answer. But Foursquare trumped Nate at his own game when the location-based app posed the question it knew everybody would want an answer to. And answered it. Social media companies are the new keepers of our data, and if they aren't using it to their marketing advantage, they're missing out.

The result? A massive PR win that resulted in media outlets ranging from *Time* to Mashable and *New York* writing, tweeting and posting about Foursquare's findings so much, they lifted the brand's blog post on the subject into the top 10 of Google's organic search results for the term "Trump businesses."

Hits



Cathay Pacific's Nepal, One Year Later

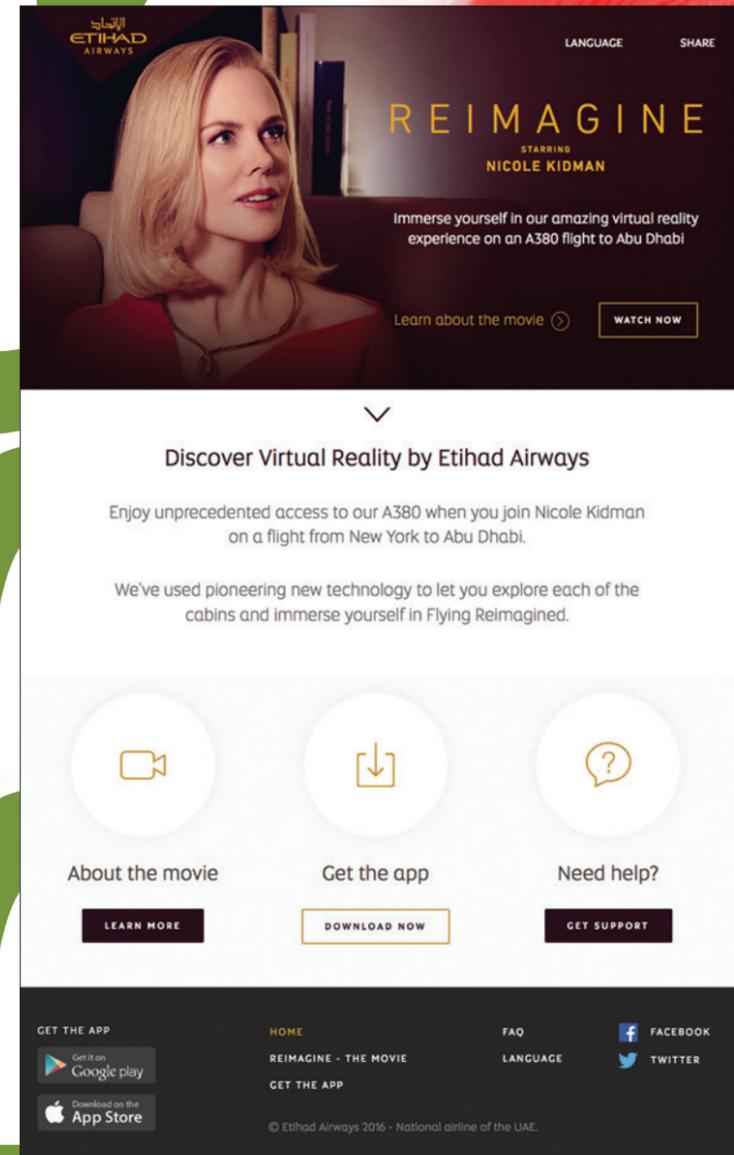
This sponsored content in *The Atlantic* is a fine piece of branded journalism that takes on the subject of health care in Nepal in the wake of 2015's devastating earthquakes. The article uses infographics, cinemagraphs and beautiful imagery, in addition to compassionate and unflinching copy, to tell the story of Possible, a nonprofit that's been charged with rebuilding the fragile nation's health care infrastructure. The content is an invigorating twist on Cathay Pacific's #lifewelltravelled campaign and is exemplary of the kind of work that helped *The Atlantic's* in-house content studio, Re:think, take home top honors at Digiday's 2016 Content Marketing Awards.

Hamburger Helper's Watch the Stove

The hottest new rap artist happens to be a walking glove. The first brand to successfully stake its claim on Soundcloud wasn't Beats by Dre—it was Helper (the artist formerly known as Hamburger Helper). Made up of five tracks written by students from McNally Smith College of Music's hip-hop department, the *Watch the Stove* mixtape isn't typical brand hijinks. It's a thoughtfully produced rap album masquerading as a marketing campaign. Or is it the other way around? It doesn't matter. *Watch the Stove* received high praise from trap music fans and social media marketing mavericks alike, with both groups contributing to the mixtape's capture of the top-trending topic on Twitter the day it dropped. Take that, Dre.



bergamont/Thinkstock



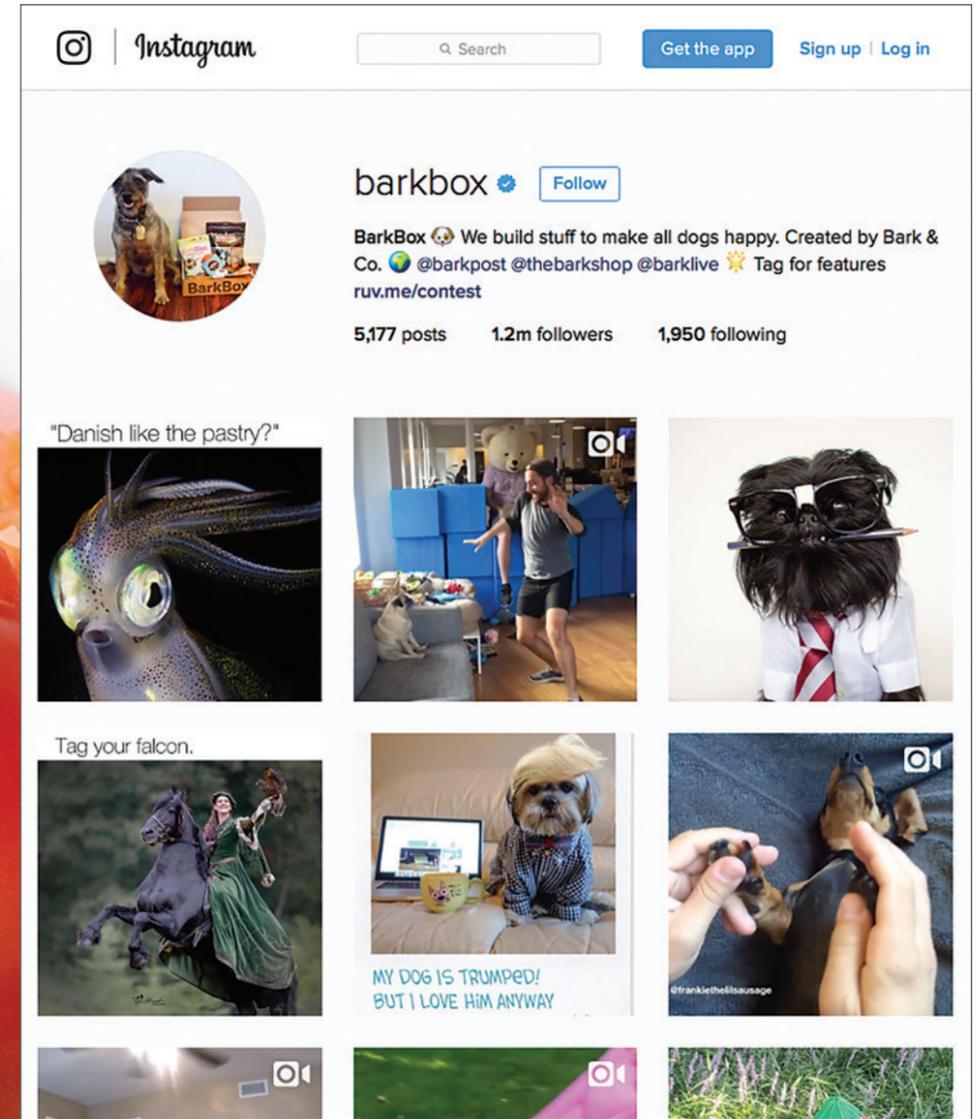
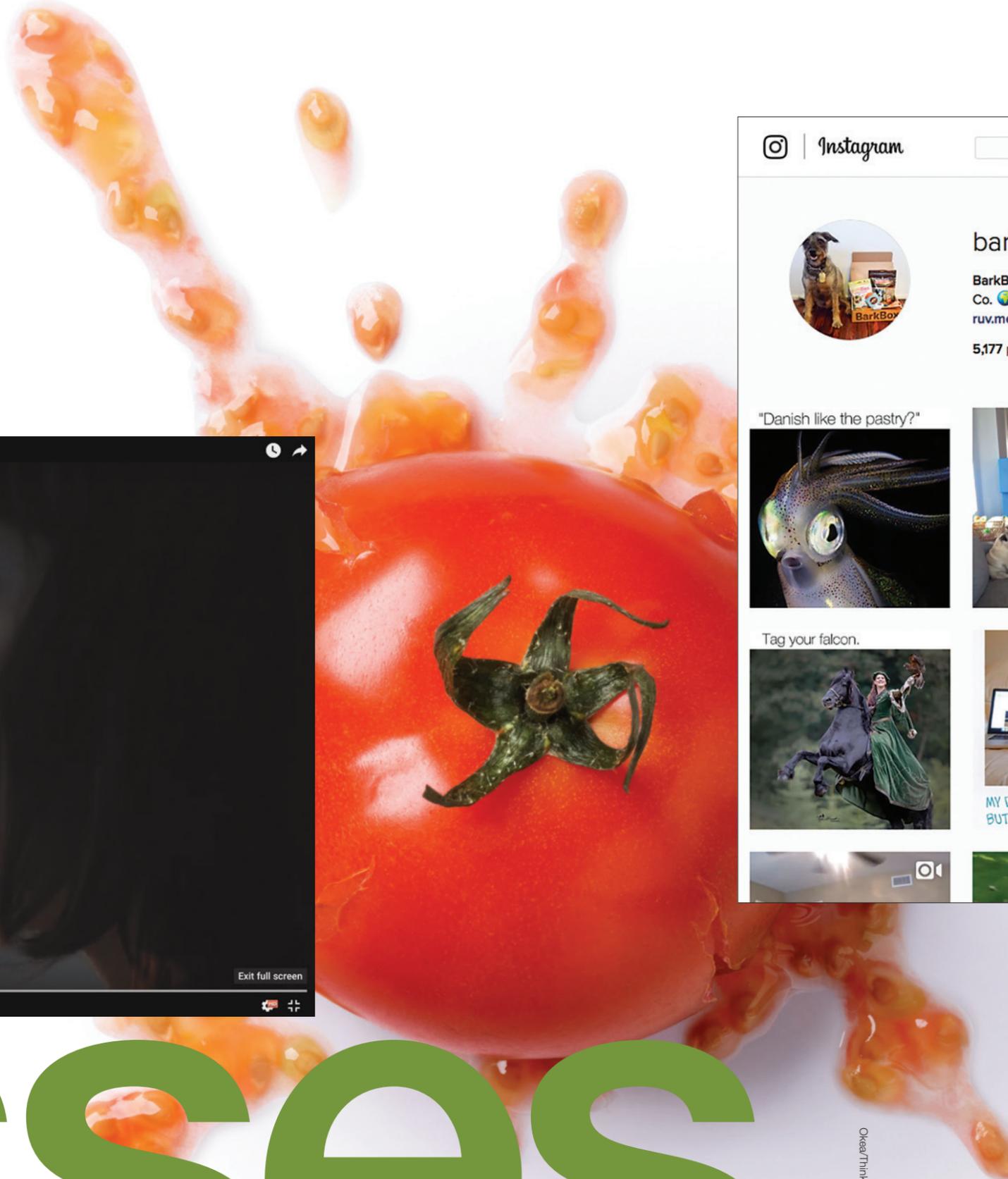
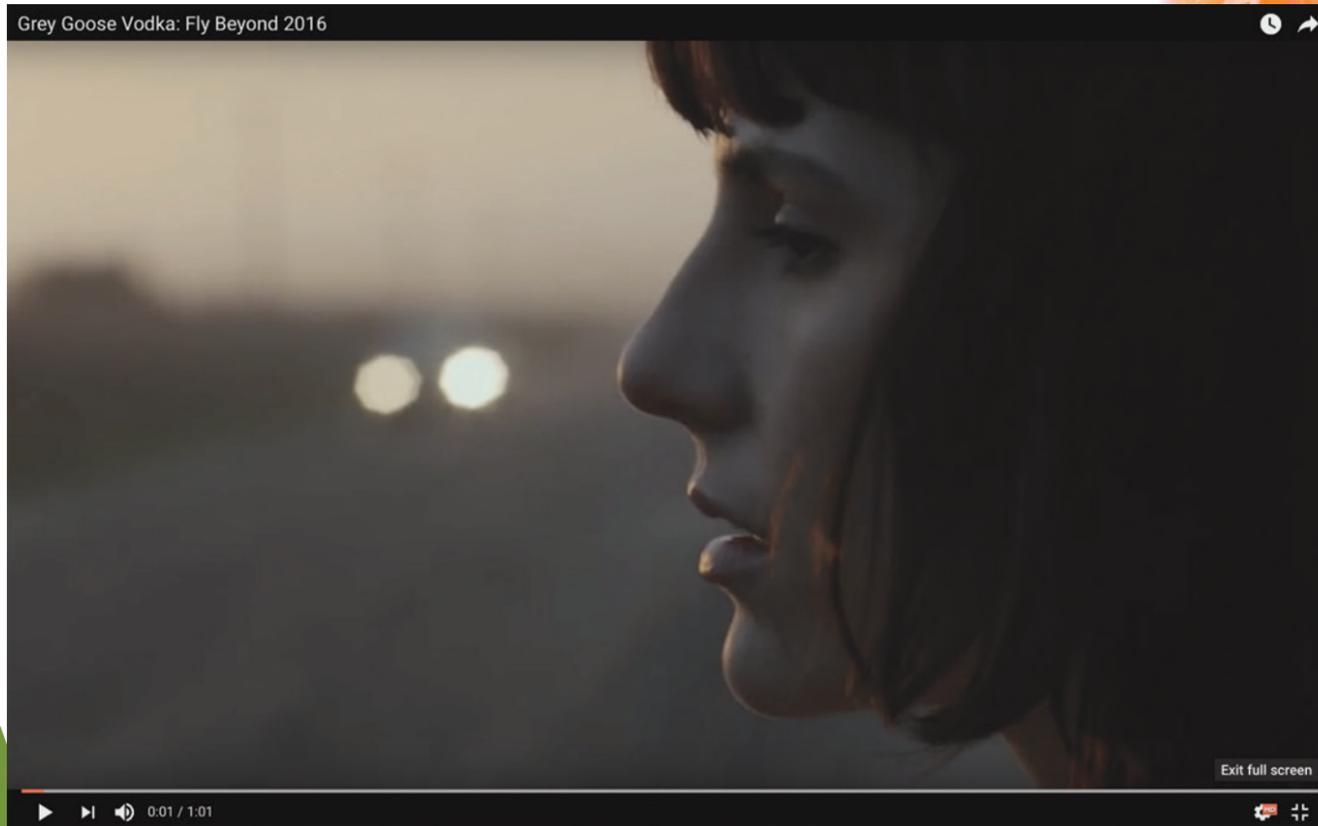
infocus/Thinkstock

Etihad Airways' Reimagine

Virtual reality can be virtually impossible to get right. Etihad Airways' five-minute film, *Reimagine*, comes closer than most, with its sleek graphics and immersive tour of its luxury aircraft. But the plot gets lost in the flashy visuals. Why is Nicole Kidman stroking an exotic bird? Despite its virtual reality rendering, the film falls flat. Instead of a lasting impression, viewers disembark with a slight case of vertigo.

Grey Goose's "Fly Beyond 2016"

With over 2 million views on YouTube, Grey Goose's latest video didn't fall entirely on deaf ears. Some people found it interesting, while others were vexed. The leap from vodka to old-timey blimp that projects movies onto a cloud is an idea that crashes and burns. It's time to reiterate an industry lesson that always bears repeating: When substance doesn't meet style in the middle, the results are underwhelming.



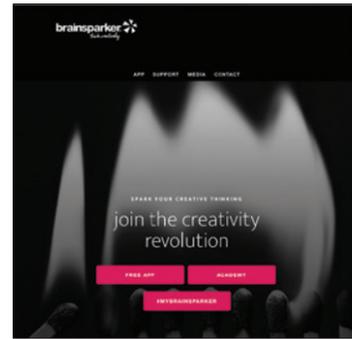
BarkBox's Instagram
When it comes to subject matter, BarkBox has it easy. Dogs are objectively more entertaining than car insurance. The brand deserves credit for amassing more than 1.2 million followers on Instagram. But its lack of focus is a bitch. For every hilarious or heartwarming user-generated dog video, there are two dozen memes of monkeys in makeup, tigers on surfboards and ducks in cowboy hats.

MISSSES

The C Sweet

10 digital resources to fire up your next big idea

BY LINDSAY ROSEMAN

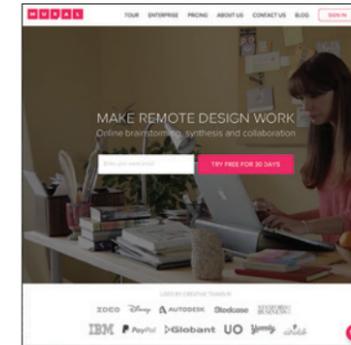


Brainsparker

What it is: An app founded on the concept that eyeing the right image, word or question will help uncover a new way of thinking that might be hidden in a corner of your brain. Users just flip through a series of questions, statements, words and images in this digital deck of cards.

Why it's cool: It's a simple yet abstract approach to creativity. You can even create a custom pack of Brainsparker cards to inspire and challenge your team.

Use it for: Brainstorming and pushing past a creative wall

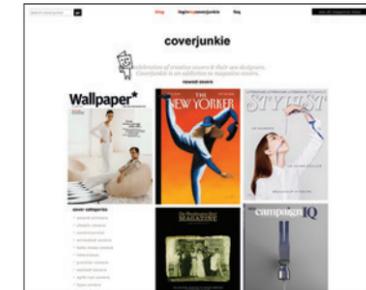


Mural

What it is: An online bulletin board to help visually organize your thoughts, identify new insights and collaborate with teammates remotely. Mural walks you through all stages of the creative process, helping you piece everything together and prioritize project details.

Why it's cool: If your brain is on information overload, Mural helps clear your head in a collaborative space. The interface allows you to turn your thoughts into virtual sticky notes, creating a board where you can organize everything in one place, and identify roadblocks and opportunities.

Use it for: Synthesizing large amounts of information and identifying your big idea

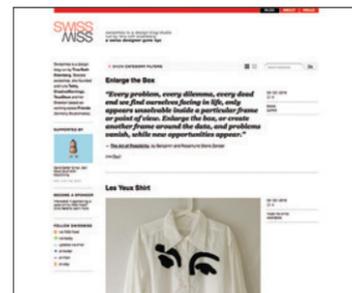


Coverjunkie

What it is: An independent blog showing off the most creative magazine covers in the industry—and their designers. You can submit your own favorite covers to share.

Why it's cool: Coverjunkie is a labor of love. As touted on the site, “everything on Coverjunkie is there to celebrate creativity. There are no banners, it’s all done out of love for magazines.”

Use it for: Finding out what’s big, bold and creative in print around the world

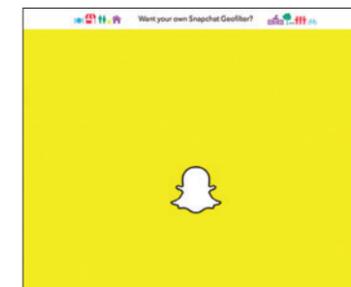


Swissmiss

What it is: Swiss designer Tina Roth Eisenberg started Swissmiss as a personal visual archive, and it's since blown up into a design journal that averages 1 million unique visitors each month. Whether you're looking for a few minutes of mindless inspiration or actively working to develop a new idea, you'll find content for both on this easily scrollable, image-based blog.

Why it's cool: Swissmiss is full of new perspectives on daily life—from beautiful flowers made out of pencil shavings to a redesigned bar of soap. Each of the posts has just a few images and a short caption.

Use it for: Rethinking creativity and finding a new way to approach a project—quick

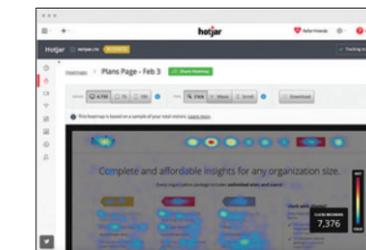


Snapchat Discover

What it is: Sure, you've heard of Snapchat, but have you actually checked out the revamped Discover content? Discover better integrates content and stories. It now allows publications to include an image and headline, and makes it easy for users to subscribe to content they like.

Why it's cool: Snapchat isn't just for kids anymore. Brands and publications are creating surprisingly sophisticated in-platform content. You can even create your own Geofilter for events and holidays.

Use it for: Seeing the best new content examples—short-form and long-form—from heavy hitters such as Food Network, *The Wall Street Journal* and CNN



Hotjar

What it is: The site dissects online user behavior by analyzing clicks, taps and scrolling behavior on websites. This is a great tool for identifying usability issues or drop-off points on your site.

Why it's cool: Through the use of heatmaps, visitor recordings, conversion funnels, form analysis, and surveys and feedback polls, Hotjar compiles and analyzes user behavior data in a visually engaging, easy-to-understand format.

Use it for: Enhancing your online UX

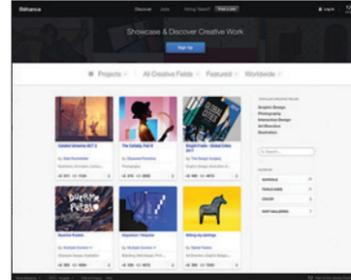


Pottermore

What it is: A digital publishing, e-commerce, entertainment and news emporium from Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling. Pottermore is an excellent example of how you can use content to create an entire new world for fans.

Why it's cool: Rowling has taken her rabid fan base and created an immersive content marketing experience that even Muggles can appreciate. It's a one-stop shop to read new writing by Rowling, learn more about your favorite characters, catch up on news and releases, shop and even get sorted into a Hogwarts house.

Use it for: Inspiration when you think you can't make a larger-than-life concept any bigger



Behance

What it is: An interactive online platform to discover creative work—everything from photography and video to product packaging and illustration.

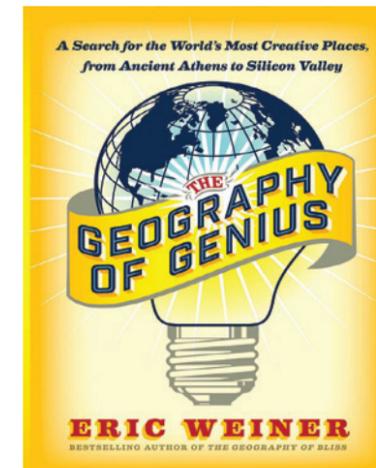
Why it's cool: Behance puts all types of creativity on display. Users can search for content by project type, but also by what's trending.

Use it for: Connecting with creators around the world

Creative Writing

Required reading on our favorite topic

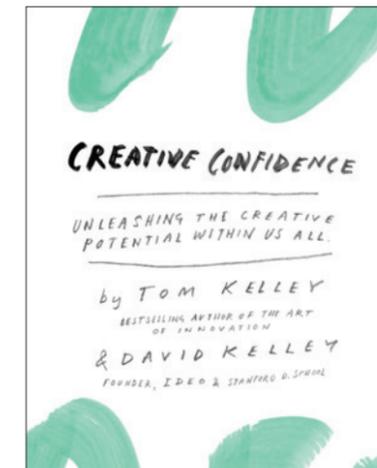
BY MARGARET POE



? The Geography of Genius: A Search for the World's Most Creative Places, From Ancient Athens to Silicon Valley
By Eric Weiner

! Biggest takeaway: A certain amount of chaos sparks creativity, as does access to different people and views. Most valuable of all? The ability to pick the good ideas from the bad. In this way, Weiner likens today's Silicon Valley to ancient Athens: It's not where good ideas are born—it's "where they learn to walk."

+ Read it if you like...
Steve Jobs
Travel writing
Self-deprecating humor



? Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All
By Tom Kelley and David Kelley

! Biggest takeaway: The best three words to encourage your team to think creatively and overcome obstacles: "How might we...?" The brains behind innovation consultancy IDEO and the design school at Stanford University deliver a resource that's part self-help tome, part leadership manual.

+ Read it if you like...
Positivity
TED Talks
Step-by-step instructions



? One Plus One Equals Three: A Masterclass in Creative Thinking
By Dave Trott

! Biggest takeaway: "As Orson Welles said, 'Don't give them what they want. Give them what they never dreamed was possible.'" Questioning the status quo (or as Trott puts it, questioning the question) propelled the many heroes in this book, from Pixar animator John Lasseter to the son of Italian immigrants who founded Bank of America. They all made history by "thinking different," as the Apple campaign famously said. Best of all, Trott's stripped-down prose is a joy to read.

+ Read it if you like...
Brevity
Ad jargon
Shining examples



Noisli

What it is: For some, moderate ambient noise can boost productivity and creativity. Noisli is a background noise and color generator you can use for both working and relaxing.

Why it's cool: Noisli mixes different sound patterns based on your mood and goals. From there, you can adjust the levels of each sound or bring in new sounds to create a customized work environment.

Use it for: Getting in the zone to get stuff done



StoryCorps

What it is: A Humans of New York-esque app that transports you around the world through vibrant first-person storytelling. The digital archive allows users to record and upload stories, and share them with friends and families—and the world.

Why it's cool: Built on the idea that "everyone around you has a story the world needs to hear," this app gives you a new global lens and showcases the beauty of raw, unedited storytelling. All stories are archived with the American Folklife Center at the U.S. Library of Congress.

Use it for: Inspiring high-quality storytelling and content creation

imagination insights



Unprecedented, inimitable, spirited, provocative, poignant
– Roderick Kelly, Senior Editor



Keeps you up all night
– Carly Hurwitz, Business Development Support Manager



Letting go of your certainties
– Megan Dawson, Associate Research Editor



Anything that re-frames your thinking
– Debra Filcman, Senior Editor



The process of abandoning fear
– Melissa Miller, Senior Art Director



Creativity: When imagination is limitless
– Maya Franklin, Associate Digital Marketing Analyst



Sometimes best motivation = pressure
– Matthew Wright, Senior Content Director



Prince's "When You Were Mine"
– Abigail Covington, Editor



Piercing mundane to find marvelous
– Erin Slater, SVP, Business Development



Doing the unexpected, with purpose
– Marla Clark, VP, Content



Unlike anything that's been done
– Margaret Poe, Editor



Eyes closed, relax, ideas flow
– Laura Yee, Content Director



Not what everyone else does
– Chuck Ulie, Financial Editor



Bringing innovative ideas to life
– Lindsay Roseman, Editor



Breath-of-fresh-air new
– Natalie Chase, Manager, Benefits & Performance



"Never seen anything like that!"
– Todd Cywinski, EVP, Client Strategy & Growth



Bushwhacking in unknown territory: eureka!
– Jeremy Gantz, Content Director



Turning an idea upside down
– Christine Moran, Editor



Ability to see the unseen
– Rebecca Rolfes, EVP



How an idea becomes reality
– Hugo Espinoza, Senior Art Director



Wicked awesome and totally captivating
– Matt Carey, Staff Accountant



Fun. Spontaneous. Inspirational. Challenging. Essential.
– David Brummer, Senior Editor



Brain + utility + beauty made real
– Kim Caviness, EVP & Chief Content Officer



Creativity meets resourcefulness. That's imagination.
– Liz Kalkowski, Art Director

Talkers

We asked Imagineers to define creativity in five words