

HBR'S 10 MUST READS ON CREATIVITY

BY HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

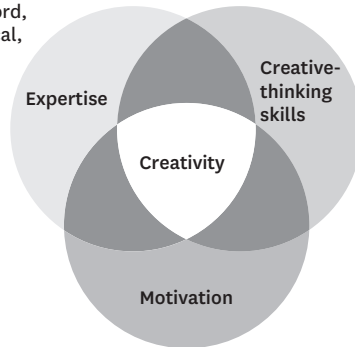
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The three components of creativity

Within every individual, creativity is a function of three components: expertise, creative-thinking skills, and motivation. Can managers influence these components? The answer is an emphatic yes—for better or for worse—through workplace practices and conditions.

Expertise is, in a word, knowledge—technical, procedural, and intellectual.

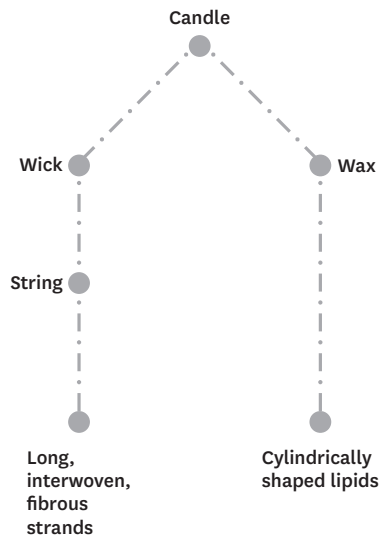


Creative-thinking skills determine how flexibly and imaginatively people approach problems. Do their solutions upend the status quo? Do they persevere through dry spells?

Not all **motivation** is created equal. An inner passion to solve the problem at hand leads to solutions far more creative than do external rewards, such as money. This component—called *intrinsic motivation*—is the one that can be most immediately influenced by the work environment.

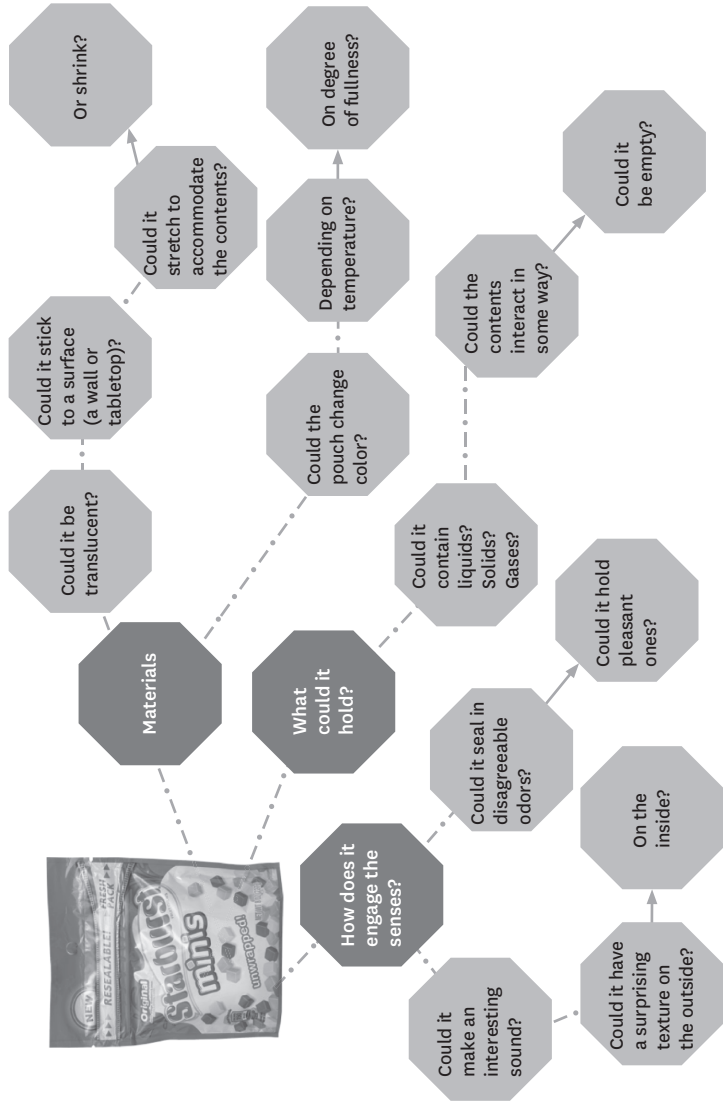
Overcoming functional fixedness

Breaking an object down into its component parts can reveal new uses.



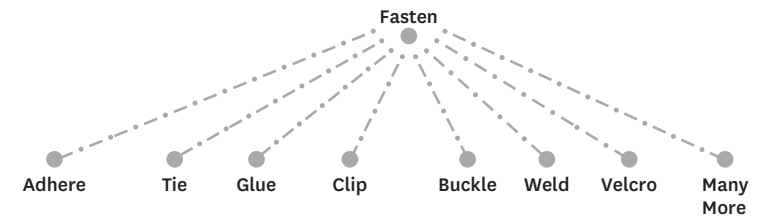
Promising features for a pouch

If you consider an object's less obvious characteristics, new purposes may arise. Some features to consider in the case of a candy pouch are:



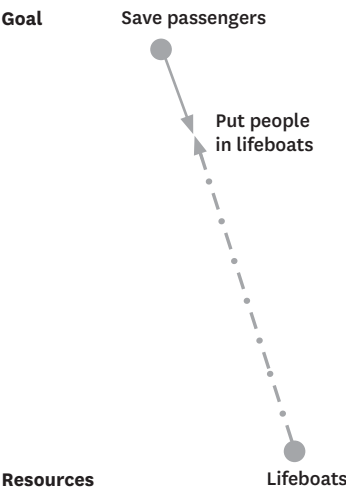
What's in a name?

How broadly—or narrowly—you phrase a goal affects how you visualize it.



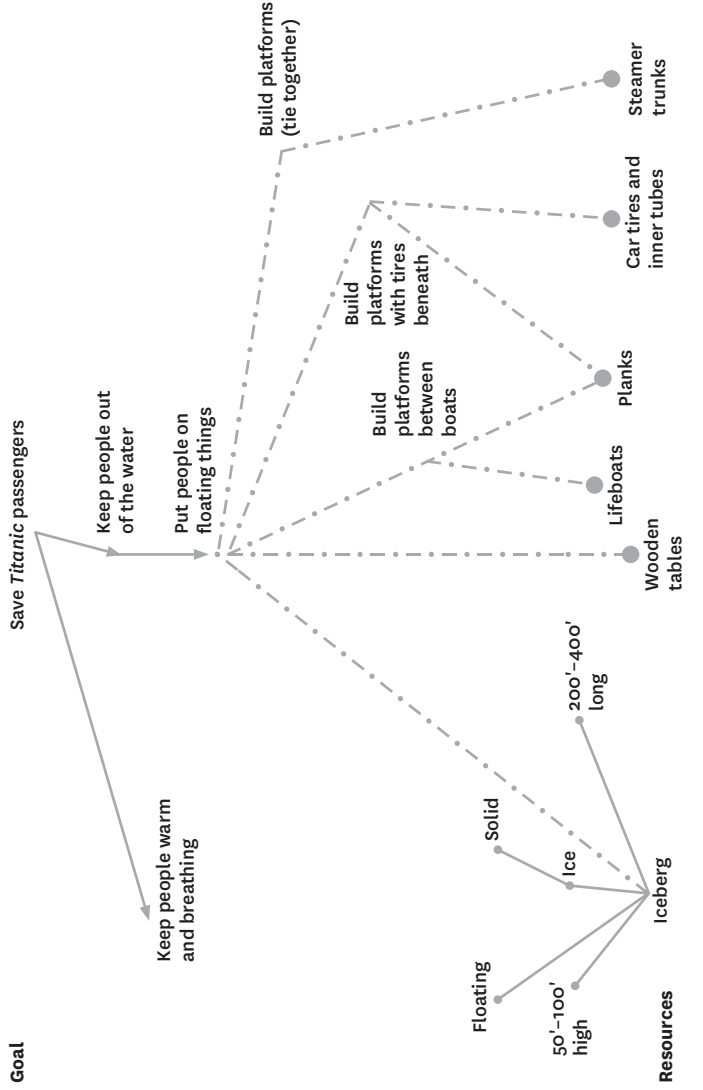
Dominant survival strategy on the *Titanic*

The first step in discovering how resources could be used to reach a goal is to map the most obvious solution.



Overlooked strategies for saving *Titanic* passengers

Find new ways to name the goal, and new resources may present themselves.



Further Reading

Attention

“Becoming a First-Class Noticer”

Max H. Bazerman

HBR, July–August 2014

Look: A Practical Guide for Improving Your Observational Skills

James H. Gilmore

Greenleaf Book Group, 2016

Perspective

“Are You Solving the Right Problems?”

Thomas Wedell-Wedellsborg

HBR, January–February 2017

The Pause Principle: Step Back to Lead Forward

Kevin Cashman

Berrett-Koehler, 2012

Imagination

“Find Innovation Where You Least Expect It”

Tony McCaffrey and Jim Pearson

HBR, December 2015

The Dance of the Possible: The Mostly Honest Completely Irreverent Guide to Creativity

Scott Berkun

Berkun Media, 2017

Experimentation

“Increase Your Return on Failure”

Julian Birkinshaw and Martine Haas

HBR, May 2016

The Innovator’s Hypothesis: How Cheap Experiments Are Worth More Than Good Ideas

Michael Schrage

MIT Press, 2014

Navigation

“How to Get Ecosystem Buy-In”

Martin Ihrig and Ian C. MacMillan

HBR, March–April 2017

The Obstacle Is the Way: The Timeless Art of Turning Trials into Triumph

Ryan Holiday

Portfolio, 2014

The time-pressure/creativity matrix

Our study suggests that time pressure affects creativity in different ways depending on whether the environment allows people to focus on their work, conveys a sense of meaningful urgency about the tasks at hand, or stimulates or undermines creative thinking in other ways.

		Time pressure	
		Low	High
Likelihood of creative thinking	High	<p>Creative thinking under low time pressure is more likely when people feel as if they are on an expedition. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Show creative thinking that is more oriented toward generating or exploring ideas than identifying problems• Tend to collaborate with one person rather than with a group	<p>Creative thinking under extreme time pressure is more likely when people feel as if they are on a mission. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can focus on one activity for a significant part of the day because they are undisturbed or protected• Believe that they are doing important work and report feeling positively challenged by and involved in the work• Show creative thinking that is equally oriented toward identifying problems and generating or exploring ideas
	Low	<p>Creative thinking under low time pressure is unlikely when people feel as if they are on autopilot. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive little encouragement from senior management to be creative• Tend to have more meetings and discussions with groups rather than with individuals• Engage in less collaborative work overall	<p>Creative thinking under extreme time pressure is unlikely when people feel as if they are on a treadmill. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feel distracted• Experience a highly fragmented workday, with many different activities• Don't get the sense that the work they are doing is important• Feel more pressed for time than when they are "on a mission" even though they work the same number of hours• Tend to have more meetings and discussions with groups rather than with individuals• Experience lots of last-minute changes in their plans and schedules

A Syllabus for Innovators

WHEN AVIATOR BEN KOHLMANN set out to build a culture of nonconformity in the U.S. Navy, he found inspiration in many sources. Here's a sampling of the items he recommends to people who want to think more creatively, along with his comments on how they've influenced his own development.

Speeches

"Lead Like the Great Conductors," TED talk by Itay Talgam

Much can be learned from professions we have no understanding of. People are people—and recognizing the commonalities is useful.

"How Great Leaders Inspire Action," TED talk by Simon Sinek

Sinek cracks the code of influence: Deep-seated desire is what inspires followers and builds movements.

Fiction

***Ender's Game*, by Orson Scott Card**

This novel illustrates how tactical and strategic teams can be adaptable—and how genius can emerge at a young age. It's especially apropos reading in the military, where we promote on seniority and not merit.

***Dune*, by Frank Herbert**

A compelling story about insurgency and taking on established powers, *Dune* explores the ambiguous nature of messianic saviors.

Nonfiction

***Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*, by Kathryn Schulz**

We're wrong a lot, and yet we almost never admit it. Schulz helped me critically evaluate my own biases and better understand how people view and portray themselves.

***The Hard Thing About Hard Things*, by Ben Horowitz**

Horowitz doesn't merely talk about how to lead; he's actually lived it. And who doesn't love a guy who starts his chapters with rap lyrics?

***The (Mis)behavior of Markets*, by Benoit Mandelbrot**

Mandelbrot is the father of fractal theory, and his insight into how that plays into the stock market transformed my understanding of luck's role in managerial successes and failures.

***Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*, by Robert Coram**

When I read this in college, I realized that those who don't toe the party line often have the most impact.

***Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, by Carol Dweck**

Dweck argues that intelligence is not fixed. My world opened up once I discovered that we can grow into what we want to be.

***Letters to a Young Contrarian*, by Christopher Hitchens**

I'm a person of faith, but I appreciate the way Hitchens incisively questions everything, even faith. I've used his methods many a time to develop contrarian positions and win debates.

TV Shows

***Sherlock* (BBC series)**

Each episode is pure fun—but yields lots of learning at the same time.