

# How Do You Get Your Creative Juices Flowing?

We asked members of our Power 50 list to reveal how they ramp up their own creativity. Check out their responses.



**PAUL LAGE**  
NORWOOD  
PROMOTIONAL  
PRODUCTS

"I have a lot of informal meetings. I will go into an office and talk about current events and ask what we could do to participate. It is energizing to have small group meetings and pull out ideas from people at all levels within the company. And, I meet once a week with Jim Simone, senior vice president of marketing, and we discuss what the industry and Norwood are going to look like in five years. We limit our meeting to 45 minutes and pick one topic. We may stay on that topic for three to four meetings before we pick a new one."



**GREG MUZZILLO**  
PROFORMA  
(asi/300094)

"At Proforma, we offer our members and their sales and service teams the opportunity to share queries and ideas openly. With the push of a button our members are able to query over 730 member offices and over 3,000 industry professionals, seeking and sharing their creative ideas."



**JIM HAGAN**  
SWEDA (asi/90305)

"Every week I meet with my team and they come prepared to discuss new ideas, abstract ideas, anything that will continue to put Sweda at the forefront of creative solutions. That could be new video ideas, new marketing campaigns or simply what we would like to run as specials. Really, there are no limits and everyone is encouraged to be as creative as possible. I love the Google model, where the employees can spend up to 20% of their time working on the "next" solution that Google will provide. We are fostering that culture within Sweda as well, because you never know what the next great idea is or who it will come from."



**BONNI SHEVIN-SANDY DARD** (asi/48500)

"I have designed and patented over 40 items, and most of the items come from a team effort of brainstorming. Every Friday, we have meetings to discuss projects, and come up with ideas of items, to fit the demographics and price points. Then my graphic artist will do some renderings, and we propose the ideas from there. Product design and idea creation is my favorite part of what I do, so the ideas seem to flow, especially when I work with such a creative team."



**GENE GEIGER** GEIGER (asi/202900)

"I rarely get inspired sitting at my desk. It takes getting out of the office to listen and interact with smart people who are doing interesting things. Stimulating ideas flow when I listen to a great speaker, visit another company or talk with a peer about how she or he is dealing with similar challenges."



**IRA NEAMAN** VANTAGE APPAREL (asi/93390)

"Change environments. Do something different, shop different places, talk with different people, read articles from journals or science publications or art books that you might not normally read. Also, working in groups from different areas of the company is helpful when creative brainstorming."



**ROSS SILVERSTEIN** IPROMOTEU (asi/232119)

"I get all sorts of creative and important business ideas from reading. I am a voracious reader; I learn a lot and it helps my business. In addition to business books, I read lots of biographies and history books. I also read sports books, as well. It's all nonfiction."



**ERIC RUBIN** BLUE GENERATION (asi/40653)

"Traveling overseas, exploring world markets, is always a tremendous source of inspiration for me. Visiting mills, factories and foreign markets enables me to get a firsthand look at what is new in fabrics, design and technology. I always return invigorated and overflowing with new ideas."



**MARTY LOTT** SANMAR (asi/84863)

"We fondly call it 'shower time.' The best place to think is in the shower."



**BRANDON MACKAY** SNUGZ/USA (asi/88060)

"I do something crazy. I love all of the following in no particular order ... snow/water skiing, mountain biking or running. If I can find time to release my A.D.D. energy, my creative juices start to flow. Taking myself out of the day-to-day element gives me a spark of life. Also, if I can return without a broken bone, that's a plus, too."



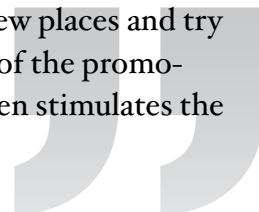
**BOB & JEFF LEDERER** PRIME LINE (asi/79530)

"We often have brainstorming sessions with our sales force and customers. We also run focus groups. At Prime, we like to be more creative and trendsetting with our approach to product development, and these exercises help with that process. We also often go to retail stores – and work with our product designers – for creative items and programs."



**DAVID WOODS** ADVENTURES IN ADVERTISING (asi/109480)

"I find the best way for me to stay creative and fresh is to constantly bombard myself with new ideas, interesting books, events and people. I love to travel, explore new places and try things I haven't done before. I like to have a wide circle of friends outside of the promotional products world, and it is interaction with this diverse group that often stimulates the best new thinking for our business."





**MARC SIMON HALO/LEE WAYNE** (asi/356000)

"To get my creative juices flowing, I make lists. To make the lists, I sound out people who I hold in the highest esteem, review historical data and read business articles, columns and books. The people I seek out are at all levels in our company, as well as trusted and respected competitors, suppliers, professional advisers and board members. I always find that when I feel stuck, this exercise loads me up with fresh ideas, new goals and an enhanced sense of vision."



**MARC ROY**  
**ACCOLADE REACTION PROMOTION GROUP**  
(asi/102905)

"We achieve this through our national sales meetings. Bringing our 50+ account execs in from across the country and having them work as a team on creative exercises and role-playing, as well as present success stories from the previous year, has been enormously successful. Our team goes back to their clients with new ideas, approaches, goals and strategies."



**RAY TITUS**  
**UNITED FRANCHISE GROUP**

"I take a pad on Sunday night, go outside and I just make lists – things we need to do, issues we need to handle, anything and everything. Then I go back over it, prioritize it and put initials of employees that need to address these. I also like to exercise – especially half-court basketball games that we play on Monday nights."



**MEMO KAHAN**  
**PROMO SHOP**  
(asi/300446)

"What we try to do is get out of the same routines as usual. We look to the retail world to find new trends and ideas. Just by walking around a store, things begin to look different and ideas are generated. Lastly, we share ideas and opportunities with our entire staff. This always helps to see what others are doing and what has been well received."



**CHARLEY JOHNSON**  
**SNUGZ/ USA**  
(asi/88060)

"To be creative you have to let go of what you believe is right and let your mind wander. Very few people actually let go of their fear of being different long enough to actually make it a reality. Creativity comes from everywhere, so always be on the lookout – most creative ideas come outside the setting of a meeting specifically designed to be creative. Get yourself around artists, creative types, and tell them about your business and let them go wild with crazy ideas – the crazier the better."



**MARY ANN FARMER**  
**MAGNA-TEL**  
(asi/68480)

"What works best for me is to read various books and articles on different subjects. I also seem to get inspired when I'm at educational events – sometimes something said will spark an idea in a whole different direction. For me, making a decision to break my usual patterns and doing different things seems to be the key. And always being open to new ideas and thoughts is a big plus."



**JO-AN LANTZ GEIGER** (asi/202900)

"I love creative time. When working with teams, our best creative thinking is to go offsite, in an environment without the usual day-to-day interruptions. We pull various individuals with different perspectives and brainstorm. At times, we use our Outdoor Activity Goal center and as a preliminary, go through some exercises with a trained facilitator to get us to stretch our minds and bodies in working through a series of physical challenges. It is a great precursor to brainstorming."



**DAVID NICHOLSON**  
**POLYCONCEPT NORTH AMERICA**

"First, I look to a core group of people at Leed's who are 'outside the box' thinkers. What's interesting is that this group consists of people from various departments – but all share an interest in driving innovation within our company. Second, I try to do a lot of reading of non-industry publications. It's a great source to see what companies are doing in other industries from a creative standpoint – how they are solving problems and looking at improving their businesses."

