

# TEST YOUR CREATIVE POWER

Think you're creative? Looking to be more creative?  
Take our quiz to measure your talents and get some new  
ideas on how to stimulate your business imagination.



*By Dave Vagnoni*



**1) Which pair of qualities most accurately describes you?**

- a) resilient and outgoing
- b) understanding and honest
- c) patient and trusting
- d) curious and persistent

**2) If you had unlimited money to spend, which of the following new cars would you buy?**

- a) black Ferrari Enzo
- b) orange Porsche Carrera GT
- c) blue BMW 7-Series
- d) white Toyota Yaris
- e) silver Honda Pilot

**3) As an account manager, you're looking for ideas for a cutting-edge marketing campaign. You seek advice from:**

- a) your boss
- b) the janitor
- c) a consulting firm
- d) a crystal ball

**4) Which of the following are you most likely to do?**

- a) sing in the shower
- b) write in a journal
- c) go to a drive-in movie
- d) text message a friend from your desk

**5) Which of these marketing plans do you like the most?**

- a) maintaining a consistent logo and tagline for many years
- b) re-branding a logo and tagline every few years
- c) joining at least three social networking sites
- d) sending frequent press releases

**6) You own a company with 50 employees. At 4:00 on a Friday afternoon in October, your staff is:**

- a) in a new-product training session
- b) in a meeting planning next week's sales strategies
- c) cold-calling
- d) eating pizza and playing office Olympics

**7) At a local chamber of commerce event, you are most comfortable doing which of these?**

- a) passing out your business card
- b) doing more listening than talking
- c) talking about new products you can offer
- d) talking about new services you can offer

**8) When facing a problem that you're struggling to solve, you most often do which of the following?**

- a) take a walk
- b) squeeze a stress ball
- c) ask a colleague for help
- d) research a solution on the Internet

**9) You're in charge of organizing an office retreat to increase creativity. Which of the following activities do you plan?**

- a) going on a nature hike
- b) role-playing a negotiation session
- c) holding a tug-of-war match
- d) all of the above

**10) You're driving through a small town on your way to a trade show that begins in two hours. Suddenly, it begins to rain and your navigation system loses its signal. What do you do?**

- a) keep driving in the direction you were headed, hoping the weather clears
- b) call a friend to ask for directions
- c) call your boss to let him/her know you might be late to the show
- d) restart your navigation system and wait for a signal

**11) Thanks to a brilliant idea, you've just won new business from a major client. What do you do next?**

- a) since you're feeling lucky, you try to pursue other accounts
- b) you go buy yourself an ice cream sundae
- c) you send your client a thank-you card
- d) you stay humble and continue your work schedule and routine

**12) You're stuck in a burning tower that's 50 feet high. You have 25 feet of heavy rope, a pack of chewing gum, goggles and a pair of scissors.**

**To escape you:**

- a) jump and hope you land softly
- b) use the chewing gum and rope to reach the ground
- c) use the goggles to put out the fire
- d) use the rope and scissors to reach the ground

**13) Which most closely resembles your daily schedule?**

- a) 10 hours of work, dinner with family, watch TV, six hours of sleep
- b) 10 hours of work, watch kids play sports, search the Web, eight hours of sleep
- c) Nine hours of work, exercise, drinks with friends, six hours of sleep
- d) Nine hours of work, nap, dinner, reading, eight hours of sleep

**14) You're charged with making more money for a struggling circus. Which of the following strategies do you employ?**

- a) offer fewer shows, but charge more money
- b) offer more shows, and charge less money
- c) hold a fundraising gala
- d) hire a new ring-leader, but keep all the other performers

## Top 10

### Phrases That Kill Creativity

1. *Yes, but ...*
2. *The boss will never go for it*
3. *I don't have time*
4. *Get a committee to look into it*
5. *We tried that before*
6. *It's not in the budget*
7. *It'll never work*
8. *No!*
9. *We've always done it this way*
10. *It's not my job*

Source: Chic Thompson

## How To Increase Creativity

- **The other half.** Use both hemispheres of your brain by changing your routine. For example, you can switch your wristwatch to the other arm or move your mouse to the other side of the computer.
- **Mind mapping.** A different approach to brainstorming, this practice is designed to generate ideas based around one central word or concept.
- **Ask a celebrity.** If you can't come up with a creative solution, think about how a famous person would deal with the problem. It can be a singer, athlete, politician or an industry expert.
- **Opposites theory.** Flip the situation around. There's a story told about a woman who owned a toy store near a park. Dogs and their owners would congregate near her door, blocking the entranceway. What did she do? She put up a sign that read: "Free Dog Biscuits." Soon, her sales shot up.
- **What if.** Ask yourself what you'd do if you won \$10 million, could design your dream house or take a month-long vacation. The exercise will give your imagination a jolt.

**15) Your goal for 2010 is to encourage creativity among your sales staff. You should:**

- a) tell them to eat together in the cafeteria
- b) tell them to volunteer at a prison
- c) buy them new computers
- d) send them to the doctor to take stress tests

**16) You've been given a special assignment by your company. Your job is to visit a state fair and find the most creative person to be your company's new marketing director. Who do you hire?**

- a) a clown
- b) the judge of a pie-eating contest
- c) the attractive magician who is also a makeup model
- d) the teenager who just won a huge stuffed animal by playing a game

**17) You're scheduled to give a presentation tomorrow morning to potential investors. After dinner tonight, you should:**

- a) watch a horror movie
- b) iron the clothes you're going to wear
- c) go to a bar, have a glass of wine and relax
- d) practice hand gestures in the mirror

**18) When do you most often hold brainstorming meetings?**

- a) between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.
- b) during smoke breaks
- c) between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.
- d) on late-night conference calls

**19) You notice a friend looks a bit depressed. Which question are you most likely to ask?**

- a) What's up with you?
- b) Why do you look so sad?
- c) How's it going?
- d) Hey, what happened?

**20) In a brainstorming session with your sales team, you most often say which of these phrases?**

- a) I like these two ideas the best.
- b) I love you guys!
- c) Yeah, that's great, but not for this client.
- d) I want to hear the dumbest idea you've got!

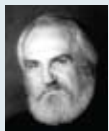
**21) How many words can be formed from the letters P-R-O-M-O?**

- a) five
- b) seven
- c) 11
- d) 12



## The Creativity Experts

Information for our questions was provided by:



**Robert Alan Black.** A leading expert on creative behavior, Black holds a Ph.D. in Educational

Psychology. He has developed hundreds of creative-thinking exercises that he's shared with audiences on six continents. [www.cre8ng.com](http://www.cre8ng.com)



**Mary Catando.** A consultant and author of four books, Catando speaks at regional,

national and international events. She also serves as an envoy for the U.S. State Department to help women in developing countries start and grow their own businesses. [www.womansadvantage.biz](http://www.womansadvantage.biz)



**Kathy Goff.** As president of an Oklahoma-based creative research firm, Goff has consulted for

NASA and the Girl Scouts of America. She specializes in business mentoring and works with highly gifted and creative children. [www.mcgoffcreativity.com](http://www.mcgoffcreativity.com)



**Joel Saltzman.** The creator of the Shake That Brain! System, Saltzman's clients include Harley

Davidson, the U.S. Treasury Department and Warner Bros. Studios. He has appeared on national television and radio, has written for sitcoms and taught at UCLA. [www.shakethatbrain.com](http://www.shakethatbrain.com)



**Chic Thompson.** The founding partner of the Creative Management Group, Thomp-

son is also a fellow at the University of Virginia's Darden Business School. His most recent book is *What a Great Idea! 2.0*. [www.whatagreatidea.com](http://www.whatagreatidea.com)

## Answer Key

Here are the most creative answers to each of the questions on our Creativity Quiz. How many did you correctly answer?

**1) D**

**Reason:** There is consensus among psychologists that curiosity is a key to creativity. Also, creative people tend to be persistent and don't easily give up on what they believe.

**2) C**

**Reason:** A University of British Columbia study has linked the color blue to creativity.

**3) B**

**Reason:** To find innovative ideas, creativity coaches suggest speaking to people who have limited knowledge of your field of business. These people aren't limited by commonly held beliefs. Children can also be great resources.

**4) B**

**Reason:** To increase creativity and idea generation, many psychologists recommend spending time writing each day.

**5) B**

**Reason:** Many creativity coaches advise companies to re-brand every few years to help business owners consider the future and expand their imaginations. Often cited is the marketing plan of McDonald's, which has used 23 different slogans in its 70 years in business.

**6) D**

**Reason:** Researchers say having fun and being in a good mood helps people be more creative.

**7) B**

**Reason:** Some psychologists argue that high-level listening skills can translate into creative thinking.

**8) A**

**Reason:** Significant research, including a study at Indiana University Bloomington, has found that increasing psychological distance can boost creativity and aid in problem solving.

**9) D**

**Reason:** Psychologists generally agree

that spending time in nature, considering different viewpoints and taking part in heated competition increases creativity.

**10) B**

**Reason:** The most creative people aggressively look for solutions and have disdain for the status quo.

**11) B**

**Reason:** While it's important to show appreciation to your client, creativity coaches say quickly rewarding great ideas with positive reinforcement (like ice cream) often leads to more great ideas.

**12) D**

**Reason:** Psychologists use a variation of this problem to test creative thinking. To escape, you cut the rope in half lengthwise and tie the two pieces together.

**13) D**

**Reason:** Increasing research, including a University of California San Diego study, links sleep with creative problem solving. Creativity is enhanced further if a nap produces rapid-eye-movement sleep.

**14) B**

**Reason:** Creative psychologists say ideas that seem to make the least sense (at first) often can be tweaked to be successful ones. Actor Tim Robbins was in a similar position with his failing theater company in Los Angeles. In doing the opposite of what initially made sense (he increased shows and lowered prices), Robbins turned the company around.

**15) B**

**Reason:** Researchers say one of the most effective ways to increase creativity is by embracing wildly new experiences. In contrast, comfort zones block creativity.

**16) A**

**Reason:** Studies show a good sense of humor contributes to creativity, so you should hire the clown. Conversely, someone who is judgmental is often limiting and is afraid to take risks.

**17) A**

**Reason:** Research shows high emotion can heighten creativity, helping you merge ideas.

**18) A**

**Reason:** Between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., research shows the brain has moderate levels of the stress hormone cortisol, making it the best time for focus and creativity.

**19) B**

**Reason:** Creative thinkers tend to ask questions that begin with "why" instead of other words. Asking "why" also usually generates conversation and can lead to solutions.

**20) D**

**Reason:** Creativity coaches say you should give your staff freedom to think differently, even asking for outlandish ideas. It's called pie-in-the-sky thinking.

**21) C**

**Reason:** Creative-minded people excel at seeing different answers to questions. In case you're wondering, the 11 words are: or, pro, mop, pom, moo, room, romp, prom, poor, moor and promo. Yes, moo totally counts. ○

## Scoring

**21 Correct** – *Creative Genius* – We want to hire you.

**17-20 Correct** – *Creative Guru* – Just call yourself Captain Creativity.

**13-16 Correct** – *Creative Expert* – You should ask for a raise (or give yourself one).

**9-12 correct** – *Creative Professional* – The ad specialties industry is for you.

**5-8 correct** – *Creative Student* – You're a bit of an understudy, but the talent is there.

**0-4 correct** – *Creative Novice* – Read this issue of *Counselor* every day this month from cover to cover.

*Dave Vagnoni is a staff writer for Counselor.*