

Roger!



Summer 2002

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Creativity That Gets Results™

Break The Creative Barrier!

Everyone gets blocked.

There are billions of blank sticky notes, chalkboards, computer screens and canvases in the world. Your mission is to fill them with creative ideas. How? **By breaking through your creative blocks.**

Throughout this issue, you'll find new ideas to break through your creative blocks. We'll share techniques and insights to help you fill in your blanks, **boosting your creativity**

Creative Building Blocks

I've worked in creativity studies for 23 years. Often, I've been asked by participants in my seminars and workshops what I do when I'm not teaching people to be more creative. Do I paint? Sculpt? Write music or books? Yes, I've done some of those things. The assumption behind those questions is that because I teach creativity, I must *always* be doing something creative.

Not true. Like everyone else, I experience creative blocks.

For example, recently I was working on a big writing project — and found myself blocked. As I stared at the blank screen, struggling to begin, I realized that the same techniques I use to help groups generate more innovative ideas could help me break through my own creative block.

and your bottom line.

Breaking through creative barriers is fun . . . exciting . . . and best of all, it can **make your business more productive and profitable.**

Have some breakthroughs for future issues? Email your suggestions to me at roger@rogerfirestien.com.

So give yourself a break . . . creatively!

That's what creative problem solving is all about — turning your *creative blocks* into *building blocks*.

Ready! Set! Wait!

Getting started often means finding the conditions that will help you be more creative. That process begins long before you start a project. So before you start, create the right conditions to help yourself overcome blocks. Here's how.



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1. Take care of yourself. Creativity takes energy. It's difficult to create if you're stressed out, not feeling well, or tired. So eat healthy foods, get plenty of exercise, and most important, get enough sleep. If you're physically prepared, you'll be mentally ready, too.

2. Find your creative time and use it. When are you most creative? Early morning? Late at night? All of us have different creative rhythms. Creativity isn't a nine-to-five job, so find those times that work for you and use them.

3. Schedule your creativity. Once you've identified your peak productivity times, schedule them like any other appointment. Don't allow yourself to be disturbed. You need stretches of uninterrupted time to work creatively. And avoid those little delaying tricks, like making that

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Creating Second Chances

When Cherise Burdeen moved from Washington, D.C. to a new job in Chicago, she threw out a lot of things preparing for the move. But one thing she kept has had a big impact on her current success.

"I couldn't take everything, but I kept Roger's book *Why Didn't I Think Of That?*," says Cherise. "I re-read it last year after starting my new job, and I began to use the steps in the book to identify problems and generate ideas. It has really helped me communicate my goals to the people I work with in my new position."

Cherise is now Manager of Quality at the Safer Foundation, the nation's largest community-based provider of services for ex-offenders. Headquartered in Chicago, the foundation provides transitional and employment services to anyone with a criminal history in the Chicago metropolitan area, and in and around Davenport, Iowa.

The goal? Helping ex-offenders literally create new, successful, law-abiding lives for themselves.

Turning Obstacles Into Opportunities

Just as the foundation helps ex-offenders find ways to become productive citizens, Cherise's job is to help everyone at the foundation find creative new ways to deliver these services more productively and cost-effectively.

Cherise first encountered creative problem solving at her previous job at the National Institute of Justice, where Roger presented his one-day seminar "Leading On The Creative Edge."

Since coming to the Safer Foundation, she has applied her creative problem solving skills to a variety of projects. From performing a process analysis of the foundation's service delivery models to participating in strategic planning, Cherise has found the tools she acquired from Roger's seminar and book invaluable in helping the foundation's management teams take a fresh look at how they achieve their goals.

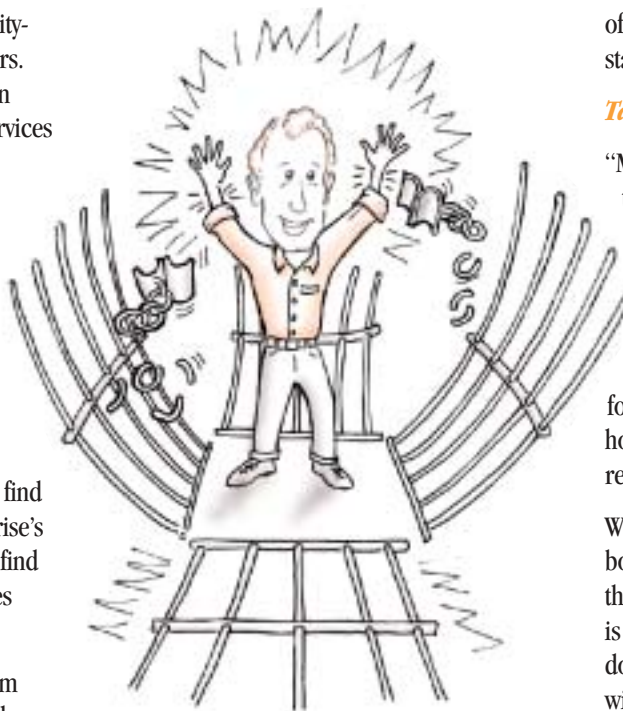
"The whole idea of generating ideas and deferring judgments is a new experience for people here at the foundation," she says. "It's helped us see beyond the way things have

been done and explore new possibilities."

Making Creativity Contagious

Even more exciting, the techniques are catching on throughout the organization. "At first, I was the only one coming up with crazy, wild solutions," she says, laughing. "But now other people are saying things that are a little unusual or haven't been tried yet here."

Among the techniques she relies on to spark new ideas is divergent/convergent thinking, something Roger calls "the heartbeat of the creative process."



First, divergent thinking explores all the possibilities, generating many ideas. Then convergent thinking selects the best options and puts them into action.

When it's time to implement options, "there's a discipline involved," observes Cherise. "When we're planning for action, now we're very specific about who will be involved and who's accountable for acting on proposed solutions."

Another technique she finds very useful is to "dig and dig and dig to identify the real issues." Because the foundation has a 30-year history of success in re-integrating ex-offenders into society, there's a tendency to always do things the way they've been done. Of course, that kind of success sometimes

prevents organizations from seeing new and better ways to achieve their goals.

"It's easy to address symptoms but not get to the root of the problem," Cherise explains. "So we throw things up on the board, then back up from there to identify what could be causing a problem, then work back again. It helps us clarify what the actual issue is. Then people get excited about coming up with solutions because they'd never realized that was the real issue."

"It's actually contagious," she says enthusiastically. "After two or three months of meeting with the same groups, everyone starts jumping in with new ideas."

Taking It To The Streets

"Many of the elements of CPS are things we try to do with our clients," says Cherise.

"Many of our clients have a very limited number of ways to solve problems, and mostly those are not law-abiding, productive-citizen ways. So we try to present them with some creative options for solving life's problems so they can learn how to solve problems they confront as they rebuild their lives."

Would she recommend Roger's seminars and books? "Of course!" she says. "One of the things I really enjoy about Roger's techniques is that there's a lightness. It's important, but it doesn't take itself too seriously. Coming up with 'silly' ways to solve a problem gives us a way to take serious problems seriously without taking ourselves too seriously."

For the future, Cherise sees many more opportunities to use creative problem solving techniques as a means of transferring successes from one part of the organization to new programs, enabling the Safer Foundation to maximize its resources and accomplish more with less — an important goal for a not-for-profit organization.

"I want to imbue the notion of 'continuous improvement' in the organization," she says. "It's a great opportunity, and people seem quite receptive because demand for our services far exceeds our capacity."

PROBLEM **SOLVED**

Colorful Idea Helps Small Florist Bloom

When a New Hampshire flower shop delivered orders late, customers loved them not. Then a Creative Problem Solving session planted a colorful idea — color-code orders so that drivers could identify priority deliveries instantly. A simple orange sticker on rush orders virtually eliminated late deliveries, saving the company's time, money

and reputation. Now the seed that started as a two-person operation has blossomed into a top-rated FTD florist with over 30 employees. And it's still growing!



Winning The Rat Race!

Is the search for new ideas making you feel like a rat in a maze?

That's how Judy Reaves and her team felt when they were asked to connect an entire elementary school to the World Wide Web. Wiring all the cables through the maze of ceilings, floors, crawl spaces and walls left them blocked for options. How did they break through? With a lab rat,

some string and a method called "forced connections."

Drawing on her experiences as a researcher in biology, Judy was able to apply ideas from her "other life" to the



current dilemma. She decided to train her research rat, Ratty, to do most of the work for her. Ratty pulled the string that was tied to the wires that went through the places that only a rat could go. It was a faster system than ever before and, except for the money spent on Ratty's food and gummy bears, far more cost-effective.

So, the next time you find yourself getting tangled in the old ways, try some "forced connections." You might not become as famous as Ratty, but the rewards will taste twice as sweet.

Go For The Gold!

"... your dynamic delivery was the perfect opening ..."

"The response was overwhelmingly positive ..."

"The gold standard of creativity training."

These are just a few of the accolades Roger Firestien has received from satisfied, even delighted, Fortune 500 clients across the country.

President of Innovation Resources, Inc. and Associate Professor at the world-renowned International Center for Studies in Creativity

in Buffalo, Roger Firestien is the author of numerous articles, books, audio and video programs.

With his unique brand of creativity training and his infectious enthusiasm, Roger has opened up an exciting new world of creative problem solving that creates real bottom-line results for companies throughout the United States, Europe and South America.

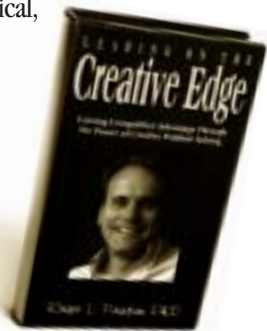
Want Roger to share his practical and proven creativity tips and techniques with your organization? Call 716-631-3564 or email roger@rogerfirestien.com.



Preview The Possibilities!

Want to see how Roger's Creative Problem Solving presentations can bring bottom-line results to your organization? Catch the excitement with a video featuring Roger presenting practical, proven tips and techniques to organizations of all kinds.

Call 716-631-3564 now to receive your Sneak Preview videotape.



Get Customized Creativity!

Now you can get bottom-line creative solutions for your real-life challenges with the Creative Problem Solving Lab.

Roger and his creative team will organize a breakthrough lab for you and your co-workers, help you define your problem, mediate and facilitate your brainstorming, and manage group dynamics.

Common problems we can help you solve include:

- Creating a strategic plan
- Developing and naming new products
- Organizing vision and mission development
- Restructuring your organization

With expert creative guidance, your sessions will go faster, produce more "out of the box" ideas and, best of all, get everyone involved!

Ideal group size and duration of the labs depend on the size and scope of your project.



Order Creative Stuff!

Need the latest creativity tools? Simply complete and fax this order form and we'll ship your order ASAP!

Please use street address. We cannot ship to a P.O. Box.

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ORGANIZATION _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____

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PRODUCT TITLE	QTY.	PRICE	TOTAL PRICE
Why Didn't I Think of That?	_____	\$10.00	\$ _____
Unleashing The Power of Creativity	_____	\$99.95	\$ _____
Leading On The Creative Edge	_____	\$20.00	\$ _____
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Unleashing The Power of Creativity

Leading On The Creative Edge

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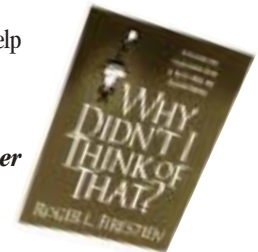
Why Didn't I Think of That?

In about an hour, you'll learn ten new tools to help you become *deliberately creative*. Learn how to develop more options, enjoy more effective teamwork, and evaluate ideas positively.

"Why Didn't I Think of That? puts the power of creative problem solving to work for you from the first page . . . Great ideas in an easy-to-read style that's fun!"

Todd W. Smith, Editor-in-Chief
Outdoor Life

73 pages\$10.00



Unleashing The Power of Creativity

A video and manual offering specific, practical guidance for conducting a successful Creative Problem Solving (CPS) session. Roles for both participants and facilitator are defined, guidelines established and questioning techniques explained.

Includes interviews with people successfully using CPS in industries from heavy manufacturing to health care.

41-minute video with facilitator's manual\$99.95



Leading On The Creative Edge

Teaches organizational and team leaders how to redefine problems, generate new ideas, put mistakes to creative use and much more. Includes numerous real-life examples of extraordinary results created by those who are "leading on the creative edge."

"You will be inspired by the bottom-line results that have been achieved through these techniques."

Cindy Moeller, Vice President of Human Resources
Baldwin Piano & Organ Company

200 pages\$20.00



“Creative Building Blocks” continued from page 1

quick phone call to re-schedule your dentist appointment.

4. Create a creative spot. Your environment can stimulate or inhibit your creativity. Do you prefer bright or dim light? Clutter or a clean workspace? Background noise or total silence? You may even find that certain places, whether it's your backyard or the beach, get your creative juices flowing. Experiment!

5. Store ideas for when you need them. Be ready to catch creative ideas whenever they occur. Use a personal digital assistant, voice recorder or pencil and paper to capture your inspirations. The idea for my book *Why Didn't I Think Of That?* came to me at 2:00 a.m. while I was visiting a friend. Because I had my pocket tape recorder, I was able to outline the book right then, so everything was there waiting until I had time to start writing.

Just Do It!

Now you're ready to get over the next hurdle — turning that blank computer screen into a canvas of creativity. Here are some tips to get your next project off to a fast start.

1. Start — now! Just start writing or painting or sculpting. Whatever your project, go ahead and get your ideas down. Remember, your work

doesn't have to be polished or complete at this point. It's crucial to let your ideas flow.

2. Getting unstuck. If you get stuck, just look around. Pick out an object or picture and see what ideas it inspires. Flip through a magazine. Play with toys. Look out the window. Associate the things you see with your project. This technique, called “forced connections,” is a great way to generate new and exciting insights.

3. Get ready to restart yourself.

Most creative projects can't be finished in one sitting. To make it easier to get started again, don't exhaust all your ideas before you stop for the day. Ernest Hemingway wrote, “I always worked until I had something done and I always stopped when I knew what was going to happen next. That way I could be sure of going on the next day.” An artist friend of mine uses the same technique, leaving part of a painting unfinished so she'll have an immediate starting place when she returns.

4. Defer judgment.

Once your creativity is flowing, don't second-guess yourself. You'll have plenty of time for rewrites and paint-overs later. In our book *Creativity*

Unbound, Blair Miller, Jonathan Vehar and I write, “Great authors are of two minds. One is the writer's mind, the wildly imaginative, freewheeling renegade. The other is the editor's mind, which goes back after the writer's mind has done its work and weeds out the extraneous, non-value-adding words, phrases and ideas. Not even the greatest writers can perform those two functions at the same time.”



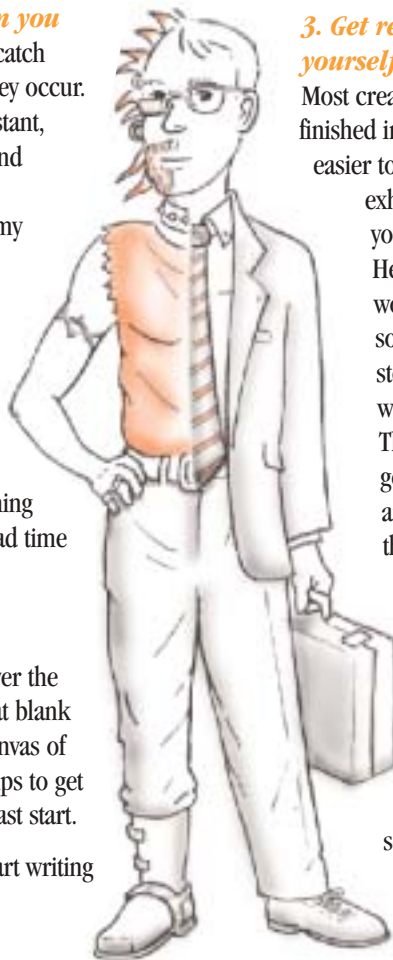
Reward Yourself

Congratulations! Once you've completed your project, reward yourself. Go out to dinner. Take a day off. See a movie. By rewarding yourself, you send a message to your brain that there's a light at the end of the tunnel. You'll also have a chance to rejuvenate and refresh your creative thinking process.

Many of the points in this article have been validated by researchers in creativity, and they've *all* been proven in practice. If you'd like more background on these and other insights into overcoming creative blocks, email me at roger@rogerfirestien.com.

Oh, yes. Remember that big writing project I mentioned earlier? I used almost every one of these methods to overcome my own creative blocks. This article is the result. And my reward will be helping you overcome your creative blocks, too.

Enjoy!



Bruce celebrated his own unique blend of “right brain-left brain.”

Who's New?

Welcome to these new Roger! readers:

- Farmers Insurance
- U.S. Department of Treasury
- Farm Credit Administration
- New York State Department of Education
- Federal Executive Institute
- Federal Prison Industries



Your Mailbox Is Full ... Of Ideas!

Thanks to the Internet, I can share the latest news and insights into creativity with you almost instantly. How? By emailing you *Insights From The Road*.



Insights From The Road offers FREE updates on creativity training, tips and techniques, including exciting new insights I've gained from the many groups and individuals I meet as I travel across the country, giving seminars and helping others make the most of their creativity.

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Get a FREE Creative Problem Solving Guide

Respond by September 15, 2002 and, as an added bonus, we'll send you a FREE Creative Problem Solving Guide. Send us your email request today!



Coming Soon: *More Creative Solutions!*

Watch for more creative problem solving techniques and tips in the next exciting issue of *Roger!*

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