

Creative Thinkering: Putting Your Imagination to Work

Michael Michalko

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While serving as an officer in the United States Army, Michael Michalko organized a team of NATO intelligence specialists and international academics to discover the best methods of inventive thinking. He has since expanded these techniques and has taught them to employees of numerous organizations and Fortune 500 companies. The author of several books, including *Thinkertoys*, *Cracking Creativity*, and *ThinkPak*, Michalko puts his creativity to work once again in his newest effort, *Creative Thinkering: Putting Your Imagination to Work*.

It's a hands-on exploration of creativity and its applications designed to awaken the inner genius that is inherent in everyone but that, in most people, has been stifled by traditional education. According to Michalko, schools inhibit original thinking by insisting that students process information by referring to past experience and the conclusions of past thinkers. Those considered "geniuses," he says, are those who have managed to retain their ability to generate associations and connections between two or more dissimilar subjects to create new categories and concepts. Called "conceptual blending," the technique can be used to reawaken the type of spontaneous and creative thought processes that give rise to innovation in both business and life.

Filled with exercises that free the mind to think in new ways, handle paradox, and access the power of the subconscious, *Creative Thinkering* can help readers become aware of where their ability to think creatively has stalled—and supply the jolt that is needed to get it moving again. Michalko presents stories of those who have used their imaginations in powerful ways to produce innovative and life-changing ideas in business, the arts, and invention.

Part I of the book explores the nature and function of creative thought and challenges readers to recognize and break out of predictable thought patterns to join the ranks of original thinkers and problem-solvers like electrical engineer James Crocker, who devised a way to focus the Hubble telescope by observing the way a German showerhead functioned; Louis Braille, who, blinded in an accident as a boy, used the differences between the scales of a pinecone to develop a way for other blind people to read; and master artist and inventor Leonardo Da Vinci, who employed the simple things around him, even the stains on a wall, as inspiration. Part II deals with the characteristics of the creative thinker, and the role of intention, speech patterns, and pretending in developing one's creativity. Using metaphor, which speaks to the unconscious mind, Michalko challenges readers to identify their roadblocks to creativity and release them, take risks, learn to live in continuous movement (by not allowing oneself to be stopped by what appear to be obstacles), overcome adversity, and make even ordinary tasks into extraordinary examples of inspiration.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September / October 2011)

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