

Theoretical Background

T H E

B R E A K T H R O U G H

C R E A T I V I T Y

P R O F I L E



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# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

*I find the great thing in this world is not so much where you stand as in what direction we are moving. To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against — but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1858

The approach to creativity on which the Breakthrough Creativity workshop is based brings together a well-grounded theory of creativity with the research of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung on personality differences. This combination is the foundation of the workshop. Therefore, it's important to understand both. This section of the Guide contains an important discussion of the two theories, a description of *The Breakthrough Creativity Profile*, and action planning questions.

## **THEORY ABOUT CREATIVITY**

The Breakthrough Creativity approach is based on three major principles:

1. Everyone is creative
2. Creativity must be broadly defined
3. There is no ideal model or one best way to be creative.

### **1. EVERYONE IS CREATIVE**

Breakthrough Creativity is based on the belief that everyone is creative. This focus on the individual as creative by nature implies that creativity does not belong to one particular group of individuals, born with a certain, special set of traits.

Instead, creativity is part of your whole being. It's the essence of who you are. Discovering your creative talents is the culmination of the process of self-actualization or individuation, in Carl Jung's terms, of coming into your own. Once discovered (or rediscovered in some cases), your creativity can be enhanced. It can grow through awareness, self-discovery, personal work, and through specific techniques and tools. The most important first step in the journey of exploring and developing your creative potential is identifying your creative talents and overcoming obstacles that are getting in the way of being your creative best.

## 2. CREATIVITY MUST BE BROADLY DEFINED

While many people agree that everyone is creative, definitions and myths are often hard to reconcile with this belief. Defining creativity as “brainstorming,” or the “generation of big ideas,” or as “creating groundbreaking innovations” misses the incremental, but just as significant, contributions made by building on what others have done. That’s what Gutenberg did when he “invented” movable type, one of the most significant creative accomplishments in modern times. A focus on geniuses and masterpieces misses the everyday creativity that happens in ordinary life, through learning new skills, exercising imagination, solving big and little problems, through parenting, and through being alive.

That’s why taking the time to reflect on your own definition of creativity is so important. My research into creativity, including countless informal conversations, more formal interviews, and the study of the lives of those judged by history as “creative,” and my experience in the business world have lead me to a definition of creativity that encompasses the wide variety of creative results and contributions that exist. From this research comes the definition of creativity that is the foundation of this workshop: the ability to consistently produce different and valuable results — a definition that encompasses the many different creative results and contributions that exist in the world. (After coming up with this definition, I found similar definitions from well-respected researchers and academics in creativity. Robert Steinberg (1999) of Yale defines creativity as “the ability to produce work that is both novel and appropriate” while Teresa Amabile (1999) at Harvard Business School calls it “the generation of novel and useful solutions”).

### Key Points about This Approach\*

Everyone is creative and has the capacity to make creative contributions and produce creative results. You may not have developed your creativity to the same degree as others have, but it’s there. When creativity is defined as the ability to “consistently produce different and valuable results,” results can take a multitude of forms, both tangible and intangible. They can be new connections, new arrangements of existing or past data, novel or new responses to a challenge. They can be big ideas and breakthroughs, or they can be small steps that build on past experience to generate better solutions.

This definition of creativity goes beyond seeing creativity as a problem-solving process. While you can use your creativity to solve problems, you can also be creative in the way you manage to bring different people together and figure out how to get them to work together, grow, and develop. Or your creative results could be selling a product or idea, fashioning and delivering an inspirational message, or inventing a life for yourself in the midst of wanted or unwanted changes.

While the definition of creativity as “consistently producing different and valuable results” recognizes wide varieties of creative contributions, it does assume that to be creative, your results have to be different from what you’ve done before. Your results don’t necessarily have to be new or original to the world; few results truly meet that criterion and yet they are still incredibly important.

\* See Chapter 1 in the *Breakthrough Creativity* book for more detail.

Just being different isn't enough, however. To be considered creative at work, your results must also be valuable. Eventually, they have to be appropriate and satisfy the needs of the situation or challenge, including your need to express yourself. Your results may not always work right the first time; after all, being creative involves learning from mistakes, experimenting, and working to come up an answer that really resolves the situation. In the process of this exploration, you often make different connections, unusual solutions, and new discoveries that would never have occurred to you otherwise.

The definition of creativity as “the ability to consistently produce different and valuable results” recognizes that creativity encompasses both a process and product. Whether you're painting a picture, writing a sonata, or resolving a product defect, finding a creative solution requires collecting data and ideas and generating alternatives. You must also make decisions or otherwise do something with the ideas you've collected. You have to act and reflect.

This definition of creativity assumes that you can be consistent and intentional in your application of creativity. To be consistent and intentional, you need to be conscious of how you are creative. In other words, creativity at work is not just about having a flash of brilliance. You need patience and persistence to take ideas and make them happen. It takes self-awareness, focus, purpose, goals, and organization to consistently produce these different and valuable results. It requires knowing who you are, what your talents and strengths are, and how to compensate for any talents that may be missing. On a team, it means figuring out how to use the talents on the team to maximize the creative contributions of all team members.

This definition and approach may differ, either implicitly or explicitly, from the one with which you have worked in the past, but it's extremely important for the success of the workshop to embrace this definition. To do so, spend some time absorbing it and thinking about what it does to your perceptions of yourself and others as creative, and then answer the following questions:

- How would you define creativity?
- How could your definition of creativity affect how you see yourself and others as creative?
- Where did you place yourself on the creativity continuum in the Participant Guide? And what does this say about your definition of creativity?
- How does your definition of creativity fit with the Breakthrough Creativity definition?

### 3. THERE IS NO “BEST” WAY TO BE CREATIVE

While everyone is creative, individuals are not alike in their creativity. That’s because there is no “best” way to be creative. The first step in reaching *your* creative best is to identify your own creative abilities or talents. By identifying your talents, you can then figure out how to be more consistent, purposeful, and effective in producing your creative results. Of course, there are many other factors that shape creative accomplishment, such as childhood experiences in school, your family situation, your ethnic origin, even your gender. However, the way you perceive the world and the way you go about doing something creative with your perceptions plays a major role in your creativity. These modes of perceiving and decision making affect the nature of your accomplishments; they color and shape your creative contributions and results. Therefore, exploring them as key drivers of your creativity is critical to reaching optimal creativity.

### JUNGIAN THEORY ABOUT PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND DIFFERENCES

There are a number of ways to determine your creative talents. One approach, a structured model, has proven to be particularly effective and efficient in helping individuals see how their personal preferences for looking at the world and performing in it shape their creativity. Through its use, you can move more quickly to defining your talents, developing a stronger sense of yourself as creative, and identifying what to do to become more creative.

### JUNG’S THEORY OF PERSONAL GROWTH

Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1888–1961) spent his whole life trying to understand individuals — their differences and uniqueness as well as the patterns that govern their behavior. Jung believed that “we are each unique, in our strengths, limitations, and talents” (Jung, 1971). Put another way, “Each individual is a new experiment of life in her ever-changing moods, and an attempt at a new solution or new adaptation (Jung, 1971). Finally, he believed that everyone is creative and that creativity is one of the primary instincts and motivating forces of life. To Jung, individuation of the personality (or what Carl Rogers and A.H. Maslow called self-actualization) is a journey that never ends. But it’s one worth risking, since it can end in finding one’s true self.

*The achievement of personality means nothing less than the optimum development of the whole individual human being. It is impossible to foresee the endless variety of conditions that have to be fulfilled. Finding this true personality is the supreme realization of the innate idiosyncrasy of a living being. It is an act of high courage flung in the face of life, the absolute affirmation of all that constitutes the individual, the most successful adaptation of the universal condition of existence coupled with the greatest possible freedom for self-determination (Jung, XVII, 1971).*

Developing one’s personality can be an unpopular undertaking. It’s a strange adventure, taking you out of safe havens and forcing you to find new routes as you search for the real you, one that is different from anybody else. (Jung, XVII, 1971) It’s clear that what Jung said about individuation can also be said about the journey to find your creative self.

## JUNG'S THEORY OF PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES

While recognizing the uniqueness of the individual, Jung also found patterns in the way human beings collected data and made decisions. Jung developed his framework of patterns not to label people, or as he said not to put them in drawers (Jung, 1968), but to help them be more effective. His model is like a compass that will help you make sense of your creative talents and further your understanding of your creativity — but it's not a detailed map; it isn't meant to be precise. However, it can help you explore your strengths and develop more self-awareness. Jung's theory is described in much more detail in Chapter 2 of the *Breakthrough Creativity* book and in several of the References.

### FOUR KEY POINTS OF JUNG'S THEORY

There are four mental functions for taking in and processing data and information. Two functions are used for perceiving or taking in data, *Sensing* (Jung called it Sensation) and *Intuition*; and two for judging or making decisions, *Thinking* and *Feeling*. All the functions are required for comprehensive understanding (and problem solving or decision-making). “Sensation establishes what is actually present, thinking enables us to recognize its meaning, feeling tells us its value, and intuition points to possibilities” (Jung, VI, 1971). Just as importantly, each one of the functions is creative and has imagination. “Imagination is the reproductive or creative activity of the mind in general. It is not a special faculty, since it can come into play in all the basic forces of psychic activity, whether thinking, feeling, sensation, or intuition” (Jung, VI, 1971). A more detailed description of the four functions may be found on pages 15–21 of Chapter 2 in the *Breakthrough Creativity* book.

In addition to the four functions, there are two attitudes, or orientations, to the world: *Introverted* and *Extraverted*. At first, Jung believed that individuals were introverted or extraverted. However, he concluded after much study that the functions, not people, are introverted or extraverted (The two orientations are described in more detail on pages 14–15 of the *Breakthrough Creativity* book). Since each of the four functions of sensing, intuition, thinking, and feeling can operate in the introverted and extraverted worlds, the combination of functions and orientations results in eight preferences. When you apply these eight Jungian preferences to creativity, the result is the Eight Creative Talents — eight different ways for taking in and processing data that produce different creative results and make distinct contributions to the success of the team or organization.

Each of the Eight Creative Talents is either introverted or extraverted. When using the four extraverted talents you tend to want to work with others to share your perceptions, ideas, concepts, thoughts, and feelings; generate alternatives; and act on your decisions. The other four talents tend to operate in a more private space. When you are using these introverted talents, you prefer to reflect and process ideas, thoughts, feelings, and decisions internally; you also prefer to keep them to yourself. Figure 3 on page 18 shows which talents are extraverted and which are introverted.

		<b>Extraverted Talents</b>	<b>Introverted Talents</b>
<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>Sensing</b>	Adventurer	Navigator
	<b>Intuition</b>	Explorer	Visionary
<b>Decision Making</b>	<b>Thinking</b>	Pilot	Inventor
	<b>Feeling</b>	Harmonizer	Poet

**Figure 3: Introverted and Extraverted Talents**

Jung believed that the creative instinct exists in everyone, and that each of the talents is equally valuable and equally creative (Jung, 1971). To be more effective and produce more creative results, you simply need to identify and develop your creative talents. You have access to each of the eight talents all of the time — in Jung’s words, “The same poet can adopt different attitudes to his work at different times” (Jung, XV, 1971). In the best of all possible worlds, in your creative processing you would use the Adventurer or the Navigator talents to find the facts in your problem definition and to research and establish what happened in the past and what is happening right now. You would use the talents of the Explorer or the Visionary to point out the hidden possibilities in the situation, see trends, and generate ideas and options about the future. You would then use the decision-making functions of the Pilot, Inventor, Harmonizer, or Poet talent to help select the right solution and then plan and implement it. You would use the Pilot and the Inventor talents to logically organize, analyze, judge, and categorize the situation. You would use the Harmonizer and Poet talents to determine the context of the situation, how people are impacted, and the value and importance of the challenge and its resolution.

While you all have access to all eight talents, most people develop a preference for one data collecting talent over the other data collecting functions and one decision-making talent over the other decision-making talents. In Jung’s model you typically develop preferences for using these two favorite talents in a certain order, with the first being called your dominant creative talent, and the second being called your auxiliary creative talent. Your dominant talent is the talent you trust most, rely on most, and use most comfortably and efficiently — it is your particular strength. It becomes better developed than the other talents because you feel most at home using it.

Your other favorite talent is your auxiliary talent, available to support your dominant talent. Your dominant and auxiliary talents work together to provide you the ability to operate in both the outer and the inner world and to manage those worlds from both a perceiving and decision making perspective. To achieve creative results, you must first collect lots of data and generate many different alternatives. You then have to do something with the best of the options — focus in, prioritize, make decisions about the alternatives, and then move forward. You need to be attuned to what is going on in the world around you, yet you also need time to reflect and figure out for yourselves what is really happening. Your favorite talents support both sets of activities.

Jung’s theory of personality preferences led him to build a model of how the dominant and auxiliary preferences worked together. In the Jungian model, one of your favorite talents will operate in the external (extraverted) world in which you share your ideas, thoughts, and feelings and one in the internal (introverted) world in which you reflect and ponder. In addition, one of your two favorite talents would tend to be a data collection talent, to help you generate alternatives, and one a decision-making talent, to help you do something with your ideas. In his research, Jung found the following patterns most typical:

<b>If your dominant talent is:</b>	<b>Then your auxiliary is either:</b>	<b>Or:</b>
<b>Adventurer</b>	<b>Inventor</b>	<b>Poet</b>
<b>Navigator</b>	<b>Pilot</b>	<b>Harmonizer</b>
<b>Explorer</b>	<b>Inventor</b>	<b>Poet</b>
<b>Visionary</b>	<b>Pilot</b>	<b>Harmonizer</b>
<b>Pilot</b>	<b>Navigator</b>	<b>Visionary</b>
<b>Inventor</b>	<b>Adventurer</b>	<b>Explorer</b>
<b>Harmonizer</b>	<b>Navigator</b>	<b>Visionary</b>
<b>Poet</b>	<b>Adventurer</b>	<b>Explorer</b>

**Figure 4: Dominant and Auxiliary Talents**

Your dominant and auxiliary talents are not evenly balanced — your dominant talent will normally be in charge. But, without the help of the auxiliary talent, you would become extremely one-sided in the world in which you best operate. You might, for example, be the perennial dilettante — moving from idea to idea, project to project, never completing anything or drawing any conclusions — if you tended to use your data collecting talent (Adventurer, Navigator, Explorer, or Visionary talent) most of the time. On the other hand, if you tended to use your decision making talent (Pilot, Inventor, Harmonizer, or Poet talent) most of the time, you might be too quick to make assumptions, jump to conclusions, and make decisions about your thoughts and feelings without taking in enough information. You might be seen as an obstinate, close-minded, and not very “imaginative” individual.

Similarly, if you don’t balance your extraverted Adventurer, Explorer, Pilot, or Harmonizer talent with an introverted one, your creative solutions might be nothing more than a series of responses to what’s happening around your or to other people’s ideas. You might not stop to ponder the meaning of what’s really happening or what you truly believe. On the other hand, if you tended to use only your introverted Navigator, Visionary, Inventor, or Poet talent, you might spend too much time in your internal, private world, processing what’s happening. The world might not ever benefit from your creative contribution.

Your talents can thus significantly shape your creative results and contributions. For example, your talents can impact where you make your most creative contribution to the team in its problem solving — in the definition of the challenge statement, through generation of alternatives, to solution implementation and reflection. They can also impact what problems and challenges you see and the type of results you produce.



The interactions between your dominant and auxiliary talents can skew the information you take in and affect your ability to produce the most creative results. Your decision-making talent, for example, can influence the type of data you take in or pay attention to (quantifiable information, ideas, or impersonal objects from the Pilot or Inventor talent; or more personal, values-oriented data and information from the Harmonizer or Poet talent). Your perceiving talent can influence the shape or form of information you take in to make evaluations and find meaning (patterns, trends, and possibilities from the Explorer or Visionary talent; or details and specifics of the immediate situation from the Adventurer or Navigator talent).

The orientation of your dominant talent can affect the quality of your creative contribution (being very focused on the external world or being unwilling to share the results of your reflection). Finally, your dominant talent can also influence your approach to finding creative solutions (an eagerness to collect data, conduct research, be divergent, and generate alternatives or quick movement to get organized, find a solution, and conclude the effort.).

The interactions among your creative talents can influence your perspectives, assumptions, approaches to creative solutions, and the kind of creative results you produce. If you're not careful to recognize the effects of the talents, you may not get the full array of information that comprehensively describes a situation, your perspectives on a challenge could be limited, or you might not evaluate possible solutions from all points of view. Thus you might not end up finding the most creative solution.

Chapters 3–10 in the *Breakthrough Creativity* book discuss each talent and its challenges in more detail. They are summarized on pages 22–23 of the book and in Figures 5 and 6 on pages 21–22 of this Guide.