

SKILLS OF THE FIVE FACES OF GENIUS

An Overview of the Creative Thinking Styles

The Seer – The Power to Image



Seers see pictures in their mind's eye. These pictures lead them to ideas. Visualization is the primary way Seers navigate their imagination. The image guides them to breakthrough ideas.

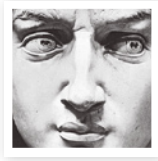
The Skill of the Seer in Creative Genius

The Nobel-prize winning physicist, Richard Feynman, used the power to image to create some of the greatest breakthroughs in physics. He saw mathematical calculations in his mind's eye. From flying function signs to colored variables floating around, he manipulated formulas in his imagination. Like rearranging furniture in his mind, ideas would flow and he would experiment with new configurations. Manipulating images led to his greatest creative insights.

The Skill of the Seer in Business Genius

King Gillette used his power to image and invented the razor blade system that revolutionized shaving in the 20th century. He visualized a solution to the classic shaving problem – using a single dangerous razor. Gillette described how his imagination worked. “As I stood there my razor in hand, the Gillette razor was born. I saw it all in a moment...I could see the way the blade could be held in a holder, then came the idea of sharpening the two opposite edges on the thin piece of steel.” His breakthrough came while paying attention to the images in his mind's eye.

The Observer – The Power to Notice Detail



The key to the skill of the Observer is curiosity. Observers collect details in a mental “basket” and from the collection of the small thing create breakthrough ideas. Paying attention to things others might miss leads to the ideas of the Observer.

The Skill of the Observer in Creative Genius

Robert Frost’s first published poem was called “My Butterfly”. While walking in the forest one day, he surveyed the ground. Among the dried leaves, he noticed a dead butterfly. He picked it up, was entranced and found the inspiration for a poem. By following his curiosity about a dead butterfly, his imagination was fueled and he created a great contribution to poetry.

The Skill of the Observer in Business Genius

A grocer store manager in Florida noticed a pregnant woman hobbling from the back of the parking lot to the front door. His curiosity kicked in. He wondered if more new moms were shopping at his market. He created a sign – with the picture of a stork – that reserved a parking place for pregnant women closer to the entrance. An idea was born by paying attention to the details.

The Alchemist – The Power to Connect Domains



Alchemists generate ideas by connecting different areas that interest them. In the connection, a breakthrough idea is born. Always searching to see what they can bring together, Alchemists use similarities – analogies – as the fire of their imagination.

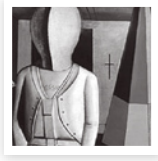
The Skill of the Alchemist in Creative Genius

The movie “Rushmore” was directed by West Anderson. Anderson admits the inspiration for a scene in his film came from watching “The Graduate”. Anderson says he borrowed the scene in which Dustin Hoffman dives into the swimming pool and stays at the bottom pondering his fate. In Rushmore, Bill Murray does the same thing – dives into the pool and meditates at the bottom about his dislike for his twin sons. It’s creativity through analogy.

The Skill of the Alchemist in Business Genius

Mickey Drexler, the former CEO of the GAP, drew upon an idea from a Coca-Cola annual report. He learned that Coke planned to grow through a strategy of ubiquity – being everywhere a thirsty person might be. Drexler made a creative connection. He chose a strategy of ubiquity and created a large expansion to grow the GAP’s business.

The Fool – The Power to Connect Domains



The Fool uses three related skills to find new ideas – inversion, absurdity and perseverance. By turning things upside down, pushing notions to the extreme and continuing to try in the face of adversity, Fools navigate their imagination to conjure up great ideas.

The Skill of the Fool in Creative Genius

When the Impressionists began painting, the trend in art was to observe nature and copy it. Elaborate details, smooth surfaces and highly finished canvases were in vogue. Monet, Manet and Renior turned the art of painting upside down. They painted their impressions of what they saw using small strokes and patches of color to create illusions. What others thought was a weakness in painting – lack of realism – became the center of the impressionist movement. The artistic revolution came through the skills of the Fool – finding the weakness and celebrating it.

The Skill of the Fool in Business Genius

Sam Walton was the business genius who created Wal-Mart. Walton took the rules of conventional retailing and turned them upside-down. Instead of choosing a location for his retail store first, he chose the location of the warehouse. In so doing, he ensure the low cost distribution of products and led the discount retailing revolution.

The Sage – The Power to Simplify



Sages navigate their imagination using the skill of simplification. When they encounter ideas, they ask themselves “What is the heart of the issue?” By coalescing the complex, they find their breakthrough.

The Skill of the Sage in Creative Genius

Ernest Hemingway wrote some of the greatest novels of all time including A Farewell to Arms and For Whom the Bell Tolls. He created a new form of writing called the journalistic style. He used short, terse sentences with little embellishments. His style utilized a bare-bones English that communicated a world with few words on the page. His genius was the ability to tell the story simply and yet profoundly.

The Skill of the Sage in Business Genius

Listen to a business artist describe how he tackled his new job at a leading company. “My team was trying to do the right thing, but no one was doing the same thing. I modified the internal structure of the team and identified a manageable number of tasks, put them in priority and defined success for each. By uncomplicated the task list and giving each a priority, we’ve been able to be more and more successful.” By simplifying, this manager was able to demonstrate his genius at work.