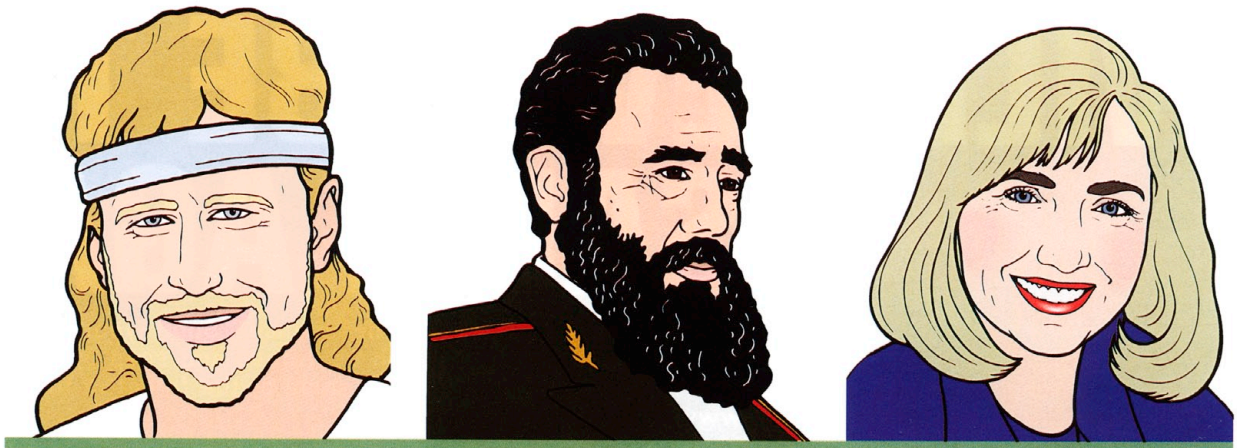


# The Five Faces of Genius:

# Creative Thinking Styles

By Annette Moser-Wellman

## to Succeed in Business



Most managers believe that if they manage well, they will succeed.

But in rapidly changing markets, being a good manager is less important than being an innovator. Those who can come up with new ideas - those who can create - become

the leaders of the organization and the industry.

**P**ersonal creativity is the skill we need the most but are taught the least. Did you have any courses in school on how to be a creative thinker? Of course not. Most of us live by the assumption that creativity is a gift that one has or doesn't have. Our formal education usually trains the creativity out of us. But in business, being an innovator will be the next core competency – the essential capability for success. So who do we model to help us learn these necessary skills? I've spent my career studying creativity in the arts and the sciences. When you look to some of the creative genius of our world, you find patterns of thinking that can augment our lives and increase our probability of new ideas in business.

I have outlined a framework of some of the most powerful skills in creative genius and how those skills are used in business. I call them The Five Faces of Genius.

#### The Seer: The Power to Image

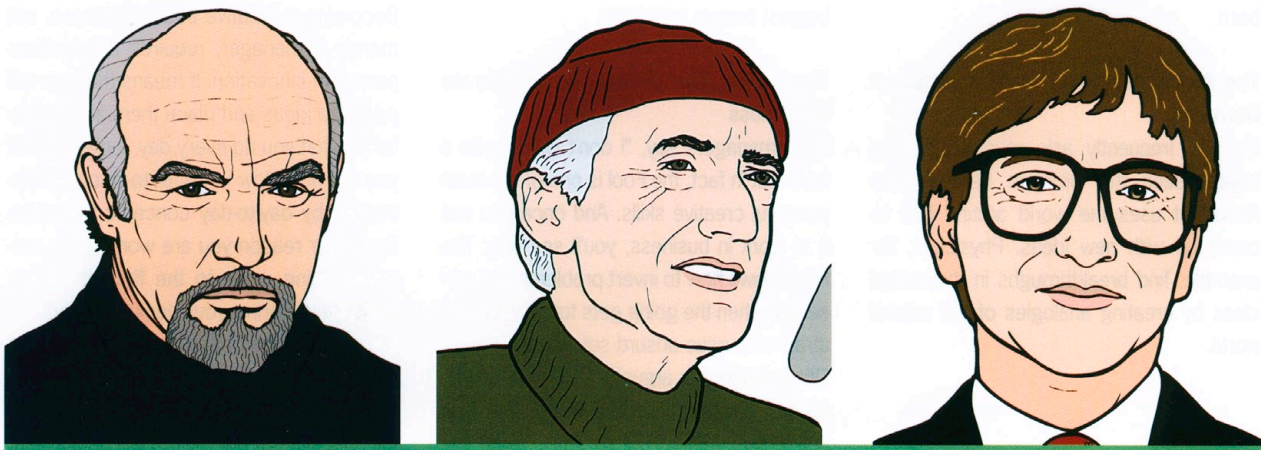
When painters begin to paint, they have an image in their mind's eye - an internal picture they "see." When musicians write music, they often have a musical score that appears in their minds. The great writer Robertson Davies said, "What appears in my head is a picture that somehow must be considered." The visual stimulates the new idea.

And the same is true in business. Bill Gates said that the original vision for Microsoft was "a PC on every desk and in every home." It was the image that created the

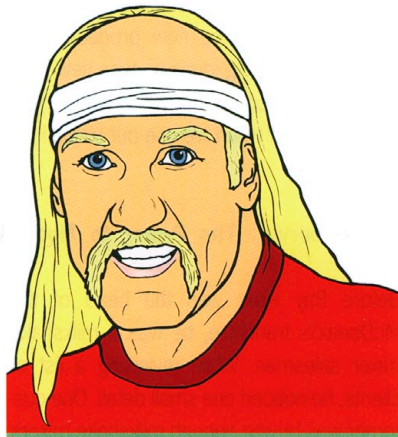
future. When executives meet in our workshops, they describe new products they see, new marketing ideas or even new businesses. Ideas come, not when we use our linear side, but when we use our visual intuition.

#### The Observer: The Power to Notice Detail

Before Ray Kroc was the head of the McDonald's franchise, he was a milkshake mixer salesman. While reviewing a list of clients, he noticed one small detail. One customer was buying enough milkshake mixers to make 40 milkshakes at one time. This made Kroc curious. He traveled long distances to see the McDonald's restaurant. He was so impressed that he joined with the McDonald's family to build the franchise.



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Observers pay attention to small things and get big ideas from those details. Former Sony President Akio Morito developed the Walkman from a small thing he noticed. During a party for one of his teenagers, he saw that kids were lugging heavy stereo equipment from one room to the next. He asked himself, "What if music were portable?" and the Walkman was born.

#### The Alchemist: The Power to Connect Domains

Do you frequently ask yourself, "Where have I seen this problem before?" The Alchemist uses the world around him to come up with new ideas. Physicists, for example, find breakthroughs in theoretical ideas by creating analogies of the natural world.

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You may use your Alchemist skill every day and not know it. Marlboro cigarettes were a brainstorm of the advertising great Leo Burnett. Burnett was flipping through a magazine and stumbled on a retrospective of the American cowboy. He connected the need to reposition the cigarette with the love of the cowboy. It was through this connection that the icon of one of the world's biggest brands was born.

#### The Fool: The Power to Celebrate Weakness

Most managers say, "I don't want to be a fool!" but in fact, the Fool is one of the most powerful creative skills. And once you see it at work in business, you'll see why. The Fool knows how to invert problems and persevere when the going gets tough, and isn't afraid to pursue absurd solutions. Oprah Winfrey is arguably the most powerful businesswoman in the world. She built her empire with a Fool strategy. When she began her talk show, other talk-show hosts were featuring people's problems and making fun of them. Oprah turned the model upside down and started focusing on the strength of the human spirit. She created a book club, a magazine and other programs that featured the positive power of humanity.

#### The Sage: The Power to Simplify

Have you ever worked with someone who could take complicated information, synthesize it quickly and then come up with a

great idea? That is the creative style of the Sage. A seemingly easy notion, but in practice, very challenging. The design greats of Bauhaus said this best with the motto "Less is more."

A perfect example of the Sage at work would be the business genius of Michael Dell. Prior to Dell computer, you had to buy a computer at a retail store. In a low-margin business, fraught with tangles of problems, Michael Dell simplified the route to market. His idea went straight to the heart of the problem and revolutionized the way we buy computers.

#### Facets of Creativity

Perhaps you have seen yourself in the thinking styles above. Our research has shown that highly creative people have the ability to use all five skills. Just like turning a sparkling diamond, the next-generation manager will be able to turn a problem in his or her mind and come up with new solutions from at least five different angles.

Becoming a creative businessperson, not merely a manager, requires a relentless pursuit of innovation. It means that you will prioritize ideas and place them at the center of what you do every day. It means that you will not allow yourself to become distracted by day-to-day concerns and miss the larger reason you are working: to creatively bring value to the firm. It means that you will bring your genius to work. Each person has been granted the gift of creativity; that is our own personal genius. When we dedicate ourselves to using the full spectrum of our minds, will be surprise ourselves. We will not only see our business grow, but we will see our careers rise. And we will become the leaders the business world is looking for. ■

*Annette Moser-Wellman is the president of FireMark, an innovation consultancy that works with some of the world's leading companies. Her expertise spans the range of strategy and vision planning to leadership and executive coaching. She is author of *The Five Faces of Genius, Creative Thinking Styles to Succeed at Work*. Website: [www.fivefacesofgenius.com](http://www.fivefacesofgenius.com)*