

## CHAPTER 3

# RECOGNIZING AND CREATING OPPORTUNITY

### Author's Note

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The essence of entrepreneurship is recognizing and creating opportunity. To become more opportunistic, students first need to reveal and enhance their creative skills. The ability to think “out of the box,” to look at the world upside down and backward, is critical to recognizing opportunities that others don’t see.

This chapter first helps students understand the creative process and how connections are made that result in great ideas. The chapter also helps them to learn more about their creative sides by providing some exercises that will encourage them to become more creative. It then goes on to look at sources of new product/service ideas.

### Learning Objectives

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This chapter will give students an understanding of:

- The nature of creativity
- The challenges to creativity
- How to remove the roadblocks to creativity
- Sources of new product/service ideas

### Supplementary Lecture Material

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#### *My Favorite Creative Exercises*

These exercises have been handed down and some form of them can be found in almost any book on creativity. Have fun with them, and your students will too.

#### **CREATIVE ACTIVITY #1: FIND YOUR TEAM**

**Objective:** To discover common backgrounds and form teams.

In this exercise, the goal is for students to introduce themselves to as many people as possible in a two-minute time frame. At the end of two minutes, the instructor will ask them to form into groups of three. They have two minutes to find three things that they all have in common—they cannot be job related (i.e., you all work for the same company). As soon as a group has its three common factors, it should shout out “we’re done.”

The discussion will revolve around looking at the types of commonalities found and the advantages/disadvantages of those commonalities for forming a team.

#### **CREATIVE ACTIVITY #2: PASS THE PROBLEM**

**Purpose:** To discover multiple solutions and opportunities from a single problem.

In teams, each person should think about a current problem or concern that needs a solution or a need that hasn't been met. Students should try to come up with a problem that the typical consumer or business is facing. They will have five minutes to think and write their problem or need on a piece of paper.

When the instructor cues the students, they should pass their papers to the person next to them. That person reads the problem or need just received and jots down below it the first thoughts that come to mind to solve the problem or address the need. The students have 30 seconds.

This process is repeated every 30 seconds until each person gets his/her own sheet back.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Did anyone discover novel solutions that you had not previously considered?
2. Can you see any value in trying some of these suggestions?
3. Do some of these suggestions trigger other ideas or solutions for you?
4. What lesson does this teach us about reaching out to technical students to assist them in recognizing opportunities?

### **CREATIVE ACTIVITY #3: TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A DISCONNECT**

**Purpose:** To experience the opportunity creation process. To learn that one core invention can produce multiple applications and opportunities.

This exercise is based on the premise that many opportunities are created by going through a process that involves:

- Connecting dissimilar concepts
- Experimentation
- Inventing something new based on connections and experimentation
- Finding applications for the invention/opportunity created

Form groups of three to five. Someone in each group should turn a piece of paper into a paper airplane. Then the group decides on a word that they are going to write on the paper airplane. It should be a noun. When all the groups have written a word on their airplanes, at the signal of the instructor, each group flies its plane to another group. It is that group's job to add another word to the plane. This pattern continues for four rounds. On the last two rounds, the word may be an adjective, adverb, or noun.

Then each group takes the airplane they end up with that has four words on it and moves into Phase One—connecting the words in a relationship such that a potential invention opportunity appears. Write that opportunity on the plane and label it “opportunity.” Once all of the groups have completed this phase and at the signal of the instructor, each group will send its airplane to another group. Phase Two begins. It is the job of each group to consider the invention opportunity and enhance it by adding new information. Write it next to the “opportunity.” At the signal of the instructor, each group then sends their plane to another group. Phase Three begins. Each group will determine the final invention opportunity based on the information given them and write it on the airplane. At a signal from the instructor, Phase Four begins. Each group will send the airplane to another group. It will be that group's job to find an application for the invention—in other words, how can it be used. At the signal of the instructor, each group will fly its plane to another group and that group will find a different application for the invention and write it as “Application 2” on the plane. This will continue one more time. The instructor will then ask the groups to report on the applications created for their inventions.

## Films to Rent

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### *The Deep Dive: One Company's Secret Weapon for Innovation*

This film looks at how product development superstar IDEO uses a highly effective form of brainstorming called the “deep dive.” It is a type of focused chaos that is used to redesign a shopping cart in this film.

[www.films.com](http://www.films.com)

23 minutes

Item: **BVL9249**

Format: **VHS**

List Price: **\$129.95**

Rental Price: **\$75.00.**

### *Intelligence, Creativity, and Thinking Styles*

This film explores how multiple intelligences and different thinking styles relate to IQ and the role that creativity should play in the development of intelligence. It includes an interview with Yale psychologist Robert Sternberg.

[www.films.com](http://www.films.com)

30 minutes

Item: **BVL9173**

Format: **VHS**

List Price: **\$129.95**

Rental Price: **\$75.00**

### *Jamming*

This film is based on the work of John Kao in “Jamming: The Art and Discipline of Business Creativity.” It proposes that creativity can be stimulated inside organizations through innovative thinking and flexible improvisation.

[www.films.com](http://www.films.com)

41 minutes

Item: **BVL7237**

Format: **VHS**

List Price: **\$149.95**

Rental Price: **\$75.00**

### *Oil on Canvas*

Here is a chance to think out of the box. This film explains and demonstrates the art and science of painting. The discussion of creativity and thinking skills is drawn from the masters of world art. This is a six-part series.

[www.films.com](http://www.films.com)

30 minutes each

Item: **BVL7762**

Format: **VHS**

List Price: **\$699.95**

## Cases Relevant to This Chapter

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Mrs. Gooch's

Franchising a Dying Business

Overnite Express

Beanos ice Cream Shoppe

Earthlink.net: The Journey to Recognizing an Opportunity

## Answers to Issues to Consider

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1. *Give an example to demonstrate that you understand the difference between an idea and an opportunity.*

You might also consider having students start with an idea and turn it into an opportunity. The bottom line is you're trying to get students to understand that we generate lots of ideas during a day. But few of those ideas have the potential to become real business opportunities. For example, the following idea suggests a need: "Wouldn't it be nice if there were a way to get the information from all the business cards I receive into my computer without having to type it all in manually." That idea was turned into a business opportunity by the person who made a connection between paper business cards and scanning devices to develop a business card scanner that now had market potential.

2. *Why do you suppose many people shy away from talking about failure?*

This question can be the basis for an excellent discussion on failure as it relates to success: the idea that if you haven't failed, you probably haven't challenged yourself enough to become really successful. Do you have to fail to become a success?

3. *Pick a business in your community and find a creative way to change either the product/service or the way it is delivered to the customers. How does your innovation add value to the business?*

This can be a very creative exercise, particularly if you encourage students to pick fairly mundane businesses (pizza parlors, shoe repair, etc.) and find ways to give them new life by changing the distribution channel, finding a need that hasn't been served or, like Starbucks, turning the mundane into an experience. Students' answers will vary on how their innovations add value to the businesses they select.

4. *Identify the challenges you face in becoming more creative. What three things will you do to address those challenges?*

This question gets students to reflect on their creative talents and how they spend their days. Often the reason a student does not consider herself creative is that she doesn't give herself any time in the day for creative thought. Now what can she do to make that happen?

## **Suggestions for Experiencing Entrepreneurship**

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1. *Spend an afternoon walking around your community or your university or college campus. Don't look for anything in particular. Observe the things that you don't normally see when you're in a hurry. Watch people—what they do and don't do. At the end of the afternoon, write down all the thoughts that come to you based on your afternoon of observation. Which of these ideas could possibly become a business opportunity and why?*

You might ask students to bring a list of three to five ideas they have had from their day of observation. Have them describe the opportunities they see in those ideas and why.

2. *Pick one of the trends discussed starting on page 68 of the chapter. Using the Internet or your library, develop a report on the current status of that trend using articles and sources no more than two years old.*

Encourage students to limit their discussion to two to three pages and focus on major trends, particularly those that are emerging such as wireless technology.