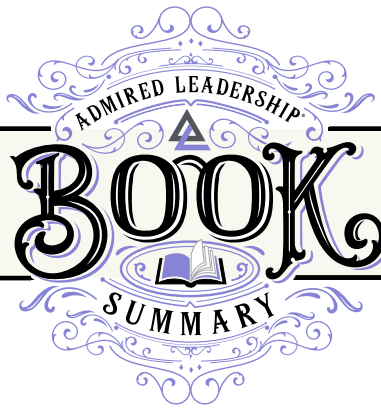




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



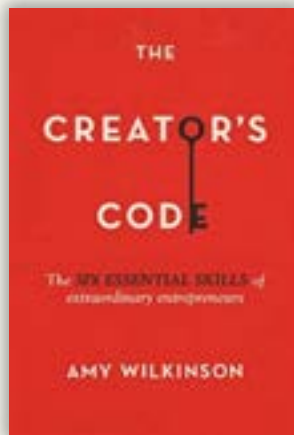
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The Creator's Code

The Six Essential Skills of Extraordinary Entrepreneurs

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Creators and entrepreneurs have similar ways of approaching problems and generating new solutions. Their approach to problem solving can be replicated to increase originality. Creatives transport ideas and search for unmet needs with gaps to fill while blending existing approaches for new results.

Key Quote

“Creators don’t get stuck looking back. They take lessons forward and avoid the trap of regret. They don’t expend effort on what has happened. Instead, they spend all of their energy on what they can do next” (p. 70).

KEY POINTS AND CONCEPTS

The Six Essential Skills of Creativity

Find the Gap. Where are the fresh opportunities, demographic trends, and unmet needs? Transplant existing ideas across fields, invent a new way forward, or combine dissimilar concepts.

Drive for Daylight. Creators avoid nostalgia and work quicker than their peers.

Fly the OODA Loop. John Body, a fighter pilot, invented the concept of the “OODA loop” which stands for Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act. Entrepreneurs are not fixed on a single idea, but instead are highly responsive to their environment.

Fail Wisely. Place bets on small tests, refine the idea, test again, and multiply your scale when it works.

Network Minds. Don't just focus on demographic diversity in your circles, but also focus on cognitive diversity. Collaborate with unlikely associates.

Gift Small Goods. Great creators are uncommonly generous. They open opportunities for others, build a network of deep relationships, and act with kindness (pp. 10-12).

Sunbirds and the Power of Analogies

Some creators are “sunbirds” who “transport solutions that work in one area and apply them to another, often with a twist” (p. 17).

Sunbirds are great at generating analogies.

Surface analogies involve product design and features. For example, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz transported the idea of the coffee bar from Europe to America. Schultz saw that Americans did not have many social venues outside of work and home. The traditional Italian café experience did not catch on in America, so Schultz tweaked his approach, making his coffee bar a place where people could come, sit, and work (p. 20).

Structural analogies help sunbirds adapt processes for a new goal.

Gutenberg invented the printing press after observing how juice was squeezed out of a wine press. George de Mestral invented Velcro after picking burrs out of his dog's fur. Track coach Bill Bowerman invented waffle-tread running shoes after studying his wife's waffle iron at breakfast (p. 21).

In a cognitive psychology experiment, only 10% of participants came up with an answer to this prompt: A patient has a tumor in their stomach and it's impossible to operate. You have rays that can be used to kill the malignant cells, and will destroy the tumor at a high intensity, but at that intensity, it will also destroy all healthy tissue. At lower intensities, the rays do not harm healthy cells, but are ineffective at destroying the tumor. How do you solve for this? 75% of participants found the answer after being told this story: A dictator ruled a small country with a strong fortress. The dictator planted mines on each road leading to his fortress. The mines were set so small bodies of men could pass over them, since the dictator needed to move his own troops. However, large groups of men would detonate the mines, destroying the road and neighboring villages. A rebel general devised a plan to dispatch small groups of his troops down different roads at the same time, so that they all reached the fortress simultaneously, overtaking the dictator. The solution for the tumor treatment was to divide the radiation and attack the tumor from multiple angles, preserving surrounding tissues while killing the targeted area (pp. 26-27).

Architects and Altering Existing Systems

“Discovery consists in seeing what everyone else has seen and thinking what no one else has thought” – **Albert Szent-Gyorgyi** (p. 15).

“Architects” recognize needs and furnish the missing pieces. They are experts at spotting inconsistencies and asking why they exist (p. 35). Sara Blakely, inventor of Spanx, embodies the ideals of the Architect entrepreneur. She routinely asks her employees, “If you didn't know how your job was done, how would you be doing it?” She landed a deal with Neiman Marcus because she called and asked, not knowing the industry norms, which is to demonstrate products at trade shows (p. 37).



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Kevin Plank was a chronically misbehaving student without a background in design or clothing. He managed to get into the University of Maryland and muscled his way onto the football team as a walk-on. He perspired a lot at practice and discovered that his saturated cotton shirt weighed three pounds. Plank bought synthetic fabric, the same used for women's lingerie, brought it to a tailor, and had seven prototypes made. The resulting product weighed three ounces dry and seven when wet. He convinced football teams to start using this new shirt, and Under Armour was born (pp. 2-4).

The “Marshmallow Challenge,” devised by Peter Skillman at Nokia, tested an individual's ability to build the tallest freestanding structure they could with twenty strands of spaghetti, a meter of tape, a marshmallow, and a piece of string. The marshmallow had to be on top. Engineers did fairly well, business school students produced the poorest results, and kindergarten students outperformed them all. They didn't waste time outlining a strategy or appointing a project manager. They kept experimenting, getting instant feedback from their mistakes, and they were the only group that asked for more spaghetti. Adults don't often question rules, but children are unimpeded by convention (p. 107).

Elon Musk has a habit stemming from young adulthood of asking his teachers and companions, “What are the three things that will have the greatest impact on the future of humanity?” (p. 16). Musk enrolled at Stanford for a PhD in applied physics, quit after two days, and was then rejected by AOL.

With two thousand dollars of savings, he started Zip2, one of the first businesses to place advertisements online. An investor refused to fund his efforts, saying that he would never replace Yellow Pages. Within four years, the company sold for over \$300 million (p. 16). With his newfound fortune, Musk decided to do something about checks, which he thought to be an outdated form of payment. He started up a company called X.com, which eventually morphed into PayPal, ultimately selling to eBay for \$1.5 billion. Musk continued to invest in problems he found. He went on to found SpaceX, Tesla, and SolarCity (p. 17).

Integrators and Reinterpreting Functionality

Integrators blend existing approaches for a new outcome. They are masters at “Janusian thinking”, named after two-faced Roman god Janus. This is the ability to conceive of at least two opposing concepts simultaneously, prompting creative thinking. Examples: “accessible luxury,” “healthy illness,” “entertaining delay,” “beautiful monster” (pp. 42-46).

Ordinary people open new markets by altering existing tools. For example, a student reprogrammed his GPS to find his keys when he lost them and a mother changed the color of hands on a clock to help her children learn how to tell time. These kinds of adaptations show insight into edges of new markets (p. 67).

“How the problem is defined will determine what solutions might be discovered” (p. 39). “The Candle Problem,” a classic Gestalt experiment, illustrates this principle. The original experiment asks for participants to take a candle, some matches, and a box of thumbtacks, and find a way to attach the candle to a wall. Most participants try to melt the candle to the wall or try to attach it with a thumbtack. The easiest way is to reinterpret the box of tacks as a shelf, use the tacks to support the box, and place the candle inside. When the experimenters present participants with the same instructions but underline the nouns (a candle, a box of tacks, and a book of matches), almost half of participants found the solution (p. 44).



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“To-Go” Thinking

“With the consumer Internet, if you’re not embarrassed by your first product release, you’ve launched too late” – Reid Hoffman (p. 92).

Creators are “to-go” thinkers, not “to-date” thinkers. Focus on what remains to be done to accelerate accomplishment, instead of congratulating yourself on the progress you’ve already made. When running a marathon, you are more likely to finish at mile eighteen if you think about the eight miles you have left, instead of the eighteen behind you (p. 59).

Jawbone founder Hosain Rahman frequently tells his employees, “Yesterday’s home run didn’t win today’s game; you’re only as good as your next hit” (p. 61). He gives new employees a T-shirt that says “underdog” because “when you are an underdog, you are scrapping, trying to find a solution, forced to be more innovative than you would like” (p. 61).

Innovators have “don’t do” lists. This helps them avoid hubris and nostalgia, and reprioritizes their focus. (p. 72).


Creators are comfortable with firing themselves.

As Andy Grove, Intel’s president, quips “only the paranoid survive.” Ask yourself “if we got kicked out and the board brought in a new CEO, what would that [person] do?” and then make that happen (p. 69). Abandon legacy and avoid nostalgia and comfortable approaches. Robert Baron from Oklahoma State found that entrepreneurs were less likely to feel regret, dwell on the past, or worry about missed opportunities. They are more likely to admit mistakes and are better at getting over them than their peers (p. 69).


Expanded Networks and Generosity

Gifting small goods and services deepens and expands a creator’s relationship network. A positive side effect of giving your time, talents, and energies is that it is often reciprocated. In a sociology experiment on generosity, Phillip Kunz from Brigham Young University mailed out Christmas cards to 600 randomly selected people he did not know, signed with “Merry Christmas from Phil.” 117 cards were sent back in return. Some people stated that they failed to recall his name, but wished him happy holidays anyway, and others included pictures of their families and updates on their personal and professional lives. Eleven people called him to ask who he was, or to catch up with what they presumed to be a long-lost friend (p. 177).

Expand your network or talent pool so that you can create flash teams when necessary. Flash teams come together quickly, work fast, and then disband. They are often used in emergency situations. Eric Rasmussen, CEO of Innovative Support to Emergencies, Disease, and Disasters (InSTEDD), had connected over seventy-five first responders worldwide within seven minutes of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. The responders came from places like Icelandic rescue teams, Tufts University, Google, the American Red Cross, and Microsoft. The team ended up saving hundreds of lives in the aftermath (p. 151).



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Failing Fast

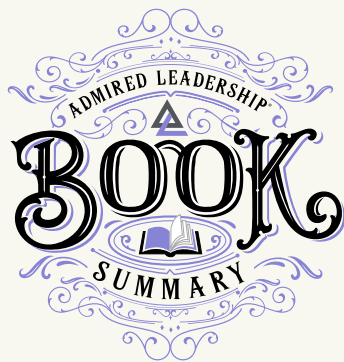
“Throw yourself off a cliff and assemble an airplane on the way down. Good startup entrepreneurs are extremely aware of the impact of time because with each second, you are closer to the ground. The whole thing is about building an airplane that is self-sustaining” – Reid Hoffman, founder of LinkedIn (p. 6).

Failure should not only be tolerated but should be part of a sustainable practice. If you’re not failing, you’re probably not being aggressive enough. Many innovators and innovative companies have at least a one to three ratio of successes to failures (p. 114).

Create an environment that feels like a start-up. Be wary of making things too precious. If an office space is too precious, people won’t make it their own. If someone is too revered, no one will question him or her, and if the system is too respected, no one in your organization will hack it (p. 144).

Flexible persistence best characterizes the highly creative. Hemingway wrote A Farewell to Arms 39 times before publishing, Alfred Hitchcock shot individual scenes of Psycho up to seventy-eight times, and Beethoven’s compositions show hundreds of pockmarks, deletions, and corrections (p. 103).

Wilkinson, A. (2015). **The Creator’s Code: The Six Essential Skills of Extraordinary Entrepreneurs**. New York: Simon & Schuster.



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