



Stanford eCorner

Unlock Creativity with Motivation and Experimentation

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In presenting her "Inventure Cycle" framework, Stanford Professor of the Practice Tina Seelig discusses how motivation and experimentation are essential for creativity. She also shows how true problem-solvers and entrepreneurs utilize whatever is within reach to overcome obstacles, and then quickly prototype, rather than let challenges stand in the way of a solution.



Transcript

Creativity requires two things. It requires motivation and experimentation, right? We, every single day are tripping over problems, tripping over opportunities, most of them don't really grab us. It's like, wow, that really made me frustrated or that was an opportunity, but we don't do anything. But it's those things that motivate us that get us to start experimenting, that's where the creativity comes in. Unfortunately, lots of people don't do this. Most people in the world are puzzle-builders. These are the folks who sort of look at their life as building a puzzle and they have the box top, they know exactly what their life should look like and they are trying to get all the pieces to put together to complete the puzzle. Now, think about it. Are you a puzzle builder? Because what happens if you are a puzzle builder is that if you're missing one of those pieces of the puzzle, what happens? You can't complete the puzzle. These are the folks who say at work, I'm really sorry that part is out of stock.

I am really sorry that person we need is on vacation, they are the ones who say I can't do that, there's a barrier in front of me. True innovators, true entrepreneurs, true creators are actually quilt-makers. These are folks who take all the things they have at their disposal and put them together to create the solution to their problems, okay? So this is what makes someone who is motivated, someone who essentially is looking around at all the resources they have at their disposal. Now, for many people who we read about in the news, the problems that they choose to tackle are those that come up and bite them. There are things that happen in their life and they go I have to do something just like Scott Harrison being in Liberia and learning about all these waterborne diseases. Let me tell you a story about a really impressive young woman. Her name is Khalida Brohi and she grew up in Pakistan in a very tiny rural village in Pakistan. And in this village, there is a very sad tradition of honor killings. Basically, this means that if a girl does something that her elders think brings dishonor to the family like wanting to marry someone who's not the person they want, they can decide to murder her. Well, she went off to Karachi to the big city and realized things didn't have to be that way and she came back to her town, her little town and her best friend had been killed in an honor killing.

She was 16 years old and she basically said, you know what? I have to do something. I am 16 years old, I don't care I need to put an end to this. And I'm going to play you a one-minute video clip of her being interviewed at the Clinton Global Initiative where she talks about - I want you to listen, she talks about her passion to solve this problem and how that led her to experiment to find solutions. Impressive. But you know what? You don't need some big, huge global mission to find a motivation and to start experimenting. You can start small and this is really important. You can start with a very small little problem that's in your environment and start doing some quick, rapid prototyping to see if there is an opportunity there. The bar doesn't have to be so high. Yes, for some people, maybe they will need to cure cancer or stop honor killings. But for a lot of us, the problems we see are everyday problems that everybody faces and we can start prototyping to come up with solutions.

This is something that is a hallmark of the things we teach in our classes and I'm going to show you an example of how this

is done. I'm going to show you a video clip that comes from the design firm, IDEO, many of you, I'm sure, have heard of it, it's just down the street and they're world-known for their incredible innovations. And one of the groups in IDEO is their toy group. And in their toy group, several years ago, they were coming up with a new iPhone app for kids called Monster Maker and they decided to see if this was something that was actually going to work. And so they created this prototype and I want you to look at it very carefully and see how much time it took for them to do this, how much money it cost, how much technology required and how effective it is in testing this concept. Okay. So how much time did that take to make? Not very much, maybe a couple of hours and how much money did it cost? Not so much, right? How much technology did this require? How effective was it? Great. Great. Right. I was giving a talk and there were some little girls in the audience and they came down at the end that they wanted to buy the app, okay? Pretty effective, okay? So this is what I mean when I talk about motivation experimentation.

The bar doesn't have to be so high, it might be, but it doesn't have to be. And this is where creativity comes from. These ideas don't necessarily have to be new to the world, but they are certainly new to you.