

Chapter Eleven – Creativity and Marketing

If one explored the research in Marketing, s/he would find many references to creativity. Most of these mentions of creativity would be found in one of three areas: advertising, personal selling, or new product development. In advertising, for example, people use the term 'creative' as a noun to describe the portion of an advertisement that comprises the artwork that translates the appeal or basic selling proposition of the ad and how the appeal will be conveyed to the target market. For example, "Susan and Bryan will be responsible for doing the creative." In personal selling, creativity is usually applied in a context of 'creative selling' with no particular specific reference to the literature of creativity or what 'creativity' really means. In new product development, creativity is used to describe how individuals or teams can identify and implement new product ideas. The examples above all miss the primary role of creativity in marketing. We will define creativity as "identifying and describing new ideas that are novel and useful." Thus, individual and group creativity plays a critical role in all phases of marketing practice.

Definitions of Creativity

An examination of the literature of other disciplines reveals dozens of definitions of creativity. From these various definitions, three themes emerge that seem to be beneficial to the study of marketing and creativity.

The first group of definitions suggests that, to be truly creative, an innovation must demonstrate "radical newness." Included are those situations in which the problem or opportunity as initially posed was vague and not well defined. Thus, part of the task is to formulate the problem itself. This has implications for marketing and a firm's ability to be more market-oriented.

A second group of definitions supposes "creativity is the imaginatively gifted recombination of known elements into something new". This group of researchers concludes that a creative solution does not necessarily require new components but can simply integrate existing knowledge in a more valuable way. This definition has implications for upstream marketing activities including target

customer needs assessment and competitive benchmarking studies. For example, we may already know that tracking customers requires a continuous data collection effort, but creativity techniques may help identify new sources or new ways to consult those sources once they are identified. We will later discuss conditions for creative environments that can enable such “imaginatively gifted recombination.”

A third group of definitions believes that, to be creative, a solution must have value. This is especially applicable in an era where the marketing information management function is participating fundamentally in pursuing a distinctive competitive advantage for the organization. The objectives of newness and imaginatively gifted recombination are meaningless if they do not provide value-added results.

Conditions of Creativity

Individuals and teams that are otherwise regarded as equally competent do not perform equally. A primary reason is that certain preconditions must be met and certain organizational components marshaled to help individuals and teams become creative. The Couger Center for the Study of Creativity has applied the 4-Ps model of creativity in many different contexts and found it to be a good guide for understanding creativity. The 4-Ps model of creativity provides the basis for the remainder of this chapter and addresses the application of structure and techniques for facilitating creativity in marketing.

The Application of Creativity: The 4-P's Model

The 4-Ps model provides a good structure for understanding creativity and its application in marketing. The model represents creativity as a dynamic phenomenon comprised of four highly interactive components: person, process, product, and press (work climate). The model's simplicity allows for the individual measurement and assessment of each component as well as evaluation of the interaction of the components. Another strength of the model is

that it can be applied to a specific functional organization, such as a marketing department or marketing research department, as well as the organization as a whole. In the remainder of this chapter, each of the four “Ps” is described and discussed in relation to marketing management and marketing research practice.

The First P: The Creative Person

Numerous fallacies exist regarding creativity in people. Few of us perceive ourselves to be creative, possibly because many highly publicized research efforts have been focused on the study of creativity in geniuses and highly accomplished professionals. Most people are inclined to believe that creativity is inherited and that we either possess it or we don't.

Research demonstrates that creativity is present in everyone and is normally distributed. Nevertheless, most people utilize less and less of their native creative ability as they mature. Nationwide studies of American school children reveal progressively lower scores on creativity tests as they move through the school system, with a precipitous “4th grade slump”.

Marketing management can stimulate creativity in employees by reinforcing the fact that all individuals are innately creative. Through encouraging the use of proven creativity techniques, marketing managers can help employees restore the natural curiosity and originality that they exhibited as preschoolers. Management can also provide motivation for employees to become more creative. It is important to consider both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from the anticipated satisfaction of generating a creative idea and putting it into effect. Marketing management can provide extrinsic motivation by rewards, such as recognition and financial incentives, and can also facilitate a creative climate (discussed later) in which employees more easily obtain the intrinsic satisfaction of creatively accomplishing a task or project.

The Second P: The Creative Process

Considerable research has focused almost exclusively on the creative

process through which people can enhance their creative abilities and creative results. Five major studies of creativity overwhelmingly show significant positive results when creative abilities are deliberately nurtured.

There are many creative problem-solving techniques that have been shown to be helpful in marketing. While the space devoted to creativity in this e-book is limited, we provide description and directions for using two of these CPS techniques. The 'Five W's and H' technique and the "Wishful Thinking" technique are described in an appendix to this chapter.

The Third P: The Created Product

An analysis of creativity can also start with the end product, by identifying the characteristics necessary for objects to be classified as creative. Others believe that if people are informed about their native creativity capabilities, are provided processes to facilitate creativity, and are supported through a positive climate for creativity, it is logical to assume that creative products and services will result. Nevertheless, it is helpful for employees to have ways to measure their creativity results. However, a framework should be developed for measurement of creativity in marketing activities. Marketing management could then translate in specific terms how creativity would be recognized, judged and rewarded. We discuss measuring the creative content of ideas in the marketing context below.

The Fourth P: Press (the Environment for Creative Work)

Press is a term from the field of education that refers to the relationship between human beings and their environment. The importance of the work environment for encouraging/discouraging creativity is well supported in creativity research. Optimum results do not occur unless an organization has a positive climate for creativity.

There has been considerable research on the ways that work environments influence creativity. The climate for creativity comprises those factors that stimulate or retard creative behavior. Studies indicate that

organization's can create a set of norms that encourage creative thinking. These norms would include universal tolerance for new ideas, and universal organizational intolerance of cynicism and sarcasm. People should be rewarded for identifying what is good about a new idea before they are allowed to be critical of the new idea. Organizations that systematically positively recognize those who find faults in new ideas will find their pool of new ideas drying up quickly since there is only negative reward for offering one's new ideas to the organization.

Burnside, in researched published in 1988, found five characteristics of a work environment that encourages creative thinking. Those five dimensions are as follows:

Goal clarity - a clearly understood objective for the creative work

Resources - the necessary financial and non-financial support

Freedom - the latitude to explore whatever directions of inquiry seem appropriate

Encouragement - genuine and expressed support from management and co-workers

**Congruity - the match between what management says and what management does

**Suspended judgment – maintaining an open marketplace for ideas in which the potential strengths of new ideas are always identified before their potential weaknesses

(**we have added these two last dimensions to the list based on our own research experience)

In marketing, attention to these six dimensions will help ensure a healthy environment for creativity that will continue the production of many fresh ideas.

Chapter Eleven Exercises

1. Has your definition of 'creativity' changed as a result of reading this chapter? Explain.
2. Form a small group and address a question assigned to you using one of the CPS techniques described below. Appoint a member of the group to keep notes of the events when your group starts "problem solving."
3. Describe a moment in your life in which you believe you were most creative, including a description of the "4 P's of creativity" in your life at the time.
4. Why are those who constantly 'kill' creative ideas by inappropriate joking or other behaviors so dangerous to the creative effort in an organization? Explain.
5. Use the six dimensions of a healthy creative climate to describe how you would establish an ideal climate for creativity at your workplace. How much change would have to take place? Explain.
6. Review the material below on "Personal Creativity Zones (PCZ's)" and describe your own PCZ.

Appendix I: Description of

Two CPS techniques:

Steps in using the “Five W’s and H” Technique

- a. identify the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the situation under consideration
- b. draw up a list of responses to each dimension
- c. use this list as a way to identify creative responses to the problem or opportunity

note: this technique is more analytical in nature because it provides a good checklist to make sure most areas are covered. While the technique is valuable to outline an area that needs to be explored, another more intuitive technique is often helpful to use to generate new ideas after this technique is applied initially

Steps in using the “Wishful Thinking” Technique

- a. suspend reality (a challenge in itself!)
- b. identify the ‘perfect solution’ that is, what would be the best solution to a situation if anything were possible.
- c. now, work back from the ‘perfect solution’ introducing reality a little at a time, being careful to challenge each part of an idea considered impossible

Note: this technique is more intuitive in nature because it provides a good tool to challenge traditional knowledge that may be no longer applicable or relevant, the technique is valuable because it starts with solutions rather than problems. Plus, this technique is FUN!☺

Appendix II: How to identify your Personal Creativity Zone (PCZ)

Finding your Personal Creativity Zone Frequently Asked Questions (or FAQ'S)

FAQ 1. What is a personal creativity zone (PCZ)?

FAQ 2. How can I identify my PCZ?

FAQ 3. Does one PCZ work for all of the problems and opportunities I want to analyze and find solutions/answers to?

FAQ 4. Will my PCZ be identical to the PCZ's of my friends and coworkers?

FAQ 5. Will my PCZ include others?

Answers to FAQ'S about Personal Creativity Zones

1. Your personal creativity zone includes all conditions, environmental and personal, that help you reach your maximum creative potential
2. While sometimes there are similarities, you must find your own PCZ through analysis and reflection. For example, identify the most creative time of your life, or a situation where you were most creative, and write down the conditions that surrounded that time of optimal personal creativity.
3. It is unlikely that you will have the same PCZ for all decisions you face. For example, deciding whether to marry a certain person may call for a different PCZ than identifying what courses will be most likely to lead you to the right college degree and career.
4. Probably not. At any rate, you must do the work to identify a personal creativity zone of your own. It is likely that some of the characteristics of your PCZ will match the PCZ of others.
5. Research in creativity has shown that very often the optimal number of members on a creative team is the dyad (two). So constantly search for the person who stimulates your creativity.
6. Remember, creativity may be work but it is also supposed to be fun, so look forward to enjoying your approach to being creative.