



HOW TO BE MORE CREATIVE IN BUSINESS BY USING THE WORD “CREATIVE” LESS

by Mark F. Martino
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One of the most iconic scenes in movie history is the one in “The Princess Bride” in which the villain Vizzini makes a deadly bet with the hero Westley. It has inspired me to make a bet with you dear reader.

It’s not nearly as iconic but makes up for it by not being nearly as threatening either. If I lose the bet, you don’t have to read my stuff. If I win the bet, you must go to Amazon and read one of my books. If you have Amazon Prime, you can read them for free.

Here’s the deal. I’ll bet I can show you that you don’t need to use the word “create” much in business. I’ll even make it hard for myself by saying you don’t need to be all that creative in business either.

The dictionary definitions for the words “create” and “creative” aren’t real useful in business anyway. For one thing, they don’t connect to each other very well. Take a look:

create - bring (something) into existence.

creative - relating to or involving the imagination or original ideas, especially in the

production of an artistic work.

What? So, shouldn't "create" mean something like, I dunno, involve imagining an original idea? Even so, still not all that useful in business. The authors of the Constitution must have thought so too because here's what they wrote:

Intellectual Property Clause. Article I, Section 8, Clause 8, of the United States Constitution grants Congress the power "To promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries."

Nothing about creativity there. Even if you go a little deeper into patent law you find that to be patentable, an invention must be useful, novel, and non-obvious. The useful aspect is pretty easy to prove. As long as the invention does something, it can be considered useful, even if used as a door stop. The novel aspect can be proven as long as you don't get too broad about it. That is, the more specific the description of the invention is, the more likely it is to be novel.

By far, the hardest of the three aspects to prove is non-obvious. You don't encounter that word much outside of the arcane subculture of patenting. That's too bad because it's a great word. It means that anyone who knows a lot about stuff used in the invention could not have conceived of the invention the way the inventor did.

More simply, non-obvious describes the mysterious magic that makes an invention an original solution.

Obviously, we don't patent every little idea we come up with and use in business. That would be nuts and not very productive. All we really care about is if our ideas are useful. And, since we're not trying to patent anything, we can fudge the word "useful" to include "entertaining." So, a movie could be useful and lots of them are just that. Most are not all that novel and how they were conceived and produced isn't all that mysterious.

But some movies are not only entertaining, but novel and even non-obvious. I was reminded of this while my wife and I were driving to our Labor Day vacation spot in Long Beach, Washington. We were listening to the audio book "As You Wish: Inconceivable Tales from the Making of The Princess Bride." Entertaining? Sure, but I also loved learning more about my favorite director Rob Reiner. For the record, my favorite Rob Reiner movie is not "The Princess Bride" or "Spinal Tap." It's "The Sure Thing," but it was still wonderful to hear all the personal stories of the people who made "Princess Bride."

Watch the movie even once and it's pretty clear that Rob Reiner and company made a beautiful movie that is useful, novel, and has the magic of being non-obvious.

But you don't really need that magic in business, at least most of it. It's cool when it happens, but you'll waste a lot of time and effort if you go at it too directly. Instead of

talking about creativity and thumping your employees with the word “create” all the time, focus on being useful; and, when you have to compete, being novel.

Even the movie makers that talk in the audio book don’t use the word “creativity” much. And neither do I. When I’m tempted to use the word “create,” I look for alternatives like: make, compose, generate, draw, write, and such. When you’re tempted to use the word “create,” ask yourself if what you’re talking about is useful, novel, and non-obvious. Since it probably won’t be, use one of those words or something like them. At first it will take a little more thinking than usual, but then it comes naturally.

So, did I win the bet? If so, you’ll find my books here:
<https://www.amazon.com/Mark-F.-Martino/e/B01DMDUR54>

Even if you won, please do me a favor. Stop using the word “creatives.” I don’t know it got started, but it seems to be used in business when the speaker doesn’t know what “creatives” do. Which is a shame because it makes it seem like there’s this one class of worker that does nothing but create all the time. Which sounds pretty tedious, common, and easy to do. Inconceivable.

Mark F. Martino writes funny narrative fiction screenplays in short and long form. Right now his company Splashtastic Productions is in post production on the pilot episode of a futuristic office comedy.