

ALSO BY KATHRYN P. HAYDON

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Creativity for Everybody

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The **NON-OBVIOUS**
GUIDE TO

Being More Creative

(No Matter Where
You Work)

By **KATHRYN P. HAYDON**



IDEAPRESS
PUBLISHING



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COVER DESIGN BY JOCELYN MANDRYK

Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file with the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-1940858-92-0

PROUDLY PRINTED IN THE USA

SPECIAL SALES

Ideapress Books are available at a special discount for bulk purchases, for sales promotions and premiums, or for use in corporate training programs. Special editions, including personalized covers, a custom foreword, corporate imprints, and bonus content are also available.

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DEDICATION

To those who have committed their lives to
understanding creativity.

Read this book to find opportunities where no one else sees them. Learn to transform ideas into valuable solutions. Harness your full thinking capacity at work and beyond with creativity—the future survival skill that you need now.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Is This Guide for You?

If you picked up this book, you are not a dummy.

Many business guides treat you like an idiot. Some even say so on the cover. This is not one of those books.

The **Non-Obvious Guides** all focus on sharing advice that you haven't heard before. Creativity is a big topic and Kathryn was the perfect choice to tackle it for our series. In her guide you'll get amazing practical suggestions for how to harness your own creativity along with suggestions for silencing that inner critic holding you back from doing your best work.

Creativity doesn't have to be scary, or just reserved for people who describe themselves as "artistic." We all have the power to be more creative, and this wonderfully written guide will show you exactly how to do it!

Rohit Bhargava
Founder, *Non-Obvious Guides*

How to Read This Book

Throughout this book you will find links to helpful guides and resources online.

DOWNLOAD LINK:

www.sparkitvity.com/nonobviousresources

Referenced in the book, you will also see these symbols which refer to content that will further your learning.

FOLLOW THE ICONS:



→ **TEMPLATES:**

Custom templates to help you strategize.



→ **DOWNLOADS:**

Excerpts or useful further reading.



→ **TUTORIALS:**

Detailed lessons on how to do a task.



→ **VIDEOS:**

Videos to watch online.



→ **CHAPTER SUMMARY:**

Quick takeaways and important points.

In this book, you will learn to harness your creativity so you can...

- Think more powerfully and originally.
- Solve problems more effectively.
- Give feedback that leads to innovation.
- Spot thinking strengths in yourself and others.
- Leverage change to your advantage.
- Turn problems into possibilities.
- Ask questions that lead to valuable solutions.
- Make meetings more productive.
- Get inspired to do your best work.

Why I No Longer Buy High Heels

The other night I was giving a speech and running up and down the auditorium steps wearing black ankle boots that could have been a medieval torture device.

After the event, I realized I would have to subject myself to another form of torture to fix the problem: shoe shopping.

While I don't mind clothes shopping, I tend to dread shoe shopping because no matter what I do, it feels nearly impossible to get a pair of comfortable, fashionable shoes.

So there I was, stuck driving to the mall on a gorgeous Saturday afternoon to conduct another search (probably in vain) for a pair of good-looking and comfortable shoes for a keynote the following week.

Knowing my style, I loaded my arms with floor samples of the typical high-heeled choices as I canvassed the shoe department with low expectations.

BEING OPEN TO THE CRAZY

My fate changed when I met a salesperson named Andre-Paul Chin. He was dressed in a bright purple shirt and had a trace of a Jamaican accent. Andre-Paul was funny, thoughtful, and cheerful as he dutifully brought me one uncomfortable pair of shoes after another.

"I wish the question weren't, 'Which shoe will hurt the least?'" I remarked cynically.

Seeing my frustration, he pointed to his own feet and his trendy, comfortable-looking kicks, and explained how he had stopped wearing dress shoes last year.

"I decided not to suffer anymore, climbing stairs to retrieve boxes of shoes all day long. I went out and found a working shoe to take the place of every dress shoe," Andre-Paul told me.

I sighed. "I wish I could do that," I said, dismissing the thought. But then he said he had a crazy idea.

He popped open a new box and proceeded to slide a pair of slippers onto my feet. The familiar sheepskin felt heavenly after all of those uncomfortable boots, and we had a good laugh about what might happen if I wore those onstage.

However, wearing that “ridiculous” choice of slippers got me thinking in a new way.

Looking at Andre-Paul, I asked if he had any more unusual ideas.

Clearly it was the question he was waiting for, because his eyes lit up and he walked me to a table of sparkling, colorful, non-heeled possibilities. A tentative wave of rebellious excitement passed over me as he spoke.

“Why not make shoes your thing?” he asked. “Why not create your own style?”

To bring his suggestion back to reality, he promptly brought out boxes and boxes of eclectic designer sneakers inspired by Italian streetwear. Skater shoes, actually.

All the while, he talked to me about starting a collection. Buying a new pair every month. Surprising audiences with different, wild shoes each time.

“No one will know what you’re going to show up in next!”

Clearly Andre-Paul was a gifted salesperson.

But the possibility he was raising—that maybe, just maybe, I could forevermore work in comfort and create a signature style for myself—felt exciting.

I began picturing my future self on stage with a collection of very expensive skater shoes. It was a major stretch.



I started my career working for a bank when men and women both wore suits. I remember hearing once that

there was even an employee whose job it was to measure the hems of women's skirts to ensure they weren't too short. I believed it.

Yet despite my long-held bias about what it meant to dress "professionally," I decided to put my hesitation aside and buy a pair of those shoes.

I'll admit that I had to think twice when getting dressed for that next keynote. But I took the risk and wore the shoes. During the talk I practically floated around the room, weaving without fear of catching a heel among the dozens of tables as I spoke.

Afterward, a crush of women came running up to me. "Thank you for wearing those shoes!" they exclaimed, almost in unison.

As it turns out, other people had the same shoe problem I did.

By going out on a limb and doing something different to solve it, I paved the way to help them find a solution, too.

WHY IT STARTS WITH TAKING A RISK

Of course, this book isn't about buying a different pair of shoes. Or succumbing to the charm of a friendly and effective salesperson.

It is about being willing to take a risk that can open your mind to being more creative.

Sometimes all you need is a gentle nudge from a guide like Andre-Paul, showing you the path.

The aim of this book is to be that nudge.

In the coming chapters, you will learn how to harness your creativity using the same methods that have worked for thousands of professionals I have had the honor of mentoring and coaching.

The curated collection of tools and techniques I share in this guide will help you adopt a mindset that helps you break through what I call "the inertia of no" (more on that later).



Andre-Paul

Above all, you will understand how thinking creatively can help you overcome limiting assumptions and do what both Andre-Paul and I did in that moment back at that shoe store.

WHAT NORDSTROM KNOWS ABOUT CREATIVITY

Andre-Paul's choice to change his footwear forced him not only to change his mindset but to navigate the corporate culture at a large retailer that could have immediately dismissed his idea.

In a "culture of no" he might never have attempted to make this change, anticipating that it would be shot down. But when the managers at Nordstrom were open to Andre-Paul's slight shift in dress code so that he could better serve customers and therefore make more sales, they sent a signal and reaffirmed creativity as part of the store culture.

His managers' acceptance signaled that seeking new possibilities was welcome.

They were open to new ideas and willing to be flexible to help employees do their best work.

What if you could work at a place like that?

What if you could be a person like that?

You can, and this book will show you how.

PART ONE

How To Be A Creative Person

CHAPTER 2

Why Creativity Matters

In our changing world, the costs of not using creativity are higher than ever.

We can become stagnant in our jobs by running out of ways to add value. We might become so enamored with prior successes that we get blindsided by new competitors. We might become paralyzed by the unfamiliar and retreat into the temporary comfort of what we've always done.

2.1

What Happens If You Don't Get Creative?

"The practical reality is that any present-tense version of the world is unstable. What we currently consider to be true—both objectively and subjectively—is habitually provisional."

- Chuck Klosterman, *But What If We're Wrong?*

Today's mantra is, "If you don't want to get disruptED, become the disruptOR."

This applies to individuals, whether employees or entrepreneurs, just as it applies to teams and entire companies.

When many jobs are on the verge of becoming extinct due to automation, outsourcing, or new inventions, it is creativity that allows us to think up ways to go forward rather than wait to get downsized and bemoan our fate. It is creativity that helps us to see patterns amidst the change and invent new roles for ourselves.

On the flip side of all the disruption, there is tremendous opportunity for those who are willing to use their creativity to adapt to change.

2.2

Change at the Speed of... Nuclear Shock Waves

In many cases, disrupted companies like Blockbuster or Sears simply did not know what hit them. They did not anticipate the speed and scope of change.

In his book *The Inevitable*, founder of *Wired Magazine* and futurist Kevin Kelly proposed that information is growing at almost the same velocity as a nuclear shock wave, or 6,000 square meters of information storage material per second!¹

Consider another metric: the number of US patents that are granted every year. Except for a blip during World War II, the number of patents issued has mirrored the exponential growth curve. Right now, we are living on the steep, accelerating part of the curve.

Patents signify new inventions which become products that get incorporated into our lives. This is just one dimension of the change in which we live.²

Story:

4 STEPS TO SELL A FOOTBALL TEAM

Matt Hall, head of upper campus at Rippowam Cisqua School just outside of New York City, is experienced in leading organizations through dramatic change.

In a prior job, it was Hall's responsibility to start a football program at a school that had long prided itself in not having a football program.

But by the end of his tenure, the new football program's most vocal critic had become its most ardent supporter.

Here's how he did it:

Step 1 UNDERSTAND THAT CHANGE IS REALITY

Hall started every presentation about the new football initiative with a conversation about change.

Step 2 NAME WHAT WILL STAY THE SAME

At the same time, Hall assured people that many other things would stay the same. He pointed out specifics.

Step 3 IDENTIFY YOUR COMFORT LEVEL

Hall then showed his Comfort with Change Spectrum (next section) and asked people to identify where they presently stood, in general and with regard to the new program.

Step 4 MOVE ALONG THE CONTINUUM

Hall's strategy and talking points helped people in his community move along the continuum to embrace the new program.

2.3

The Comfort with Change Spectrum



Active Resister | In Denial | Need a Nudge | Open Arms

Which category best describes how you feel about change?

Active Resister

The active resister category is represented by a bottle of poison. That's how you feel about change.

In Denial

You'd rather turn the page and keep doing what you are doing because it's going just fine right now, thank you very much.

Need a Nudge

You may not have thought too much about change before, but reading these chapters helps you consider how it relates to you.

Open Arms

Yes, yes, yes! This is so exciting. You are ready for the next iteration!

2.4

Three Tips To Help You Embrace Change

Tip 1 **PRETEND IT'S OPPOSITE DAY**

Try doing the opposite of what you normally do. If you usually wear gray and black, go bright. If you walk, run. If you go to the gym, take a walk. Read a book instead of scrolling on your phone. Shake things up just a little bit to crack open the door to change.

Tip 2 **MOVE YOUR FURNITURE**

A great way to shift your perspective is to try shifting your own surroundings to move the needle on your change tolerance.

Slide your computer monitor to the opposite end of your desk. Turn the table the other way. Switch your wall hangings. Go wild and draw on your sparkling clean whiteboard.

Tip 3 LEARN TO PIVOT

Jenny Blake, a former career development specialist at Google, is an author and podcaster extraordinaire. Her motto is, "If change is the only constant, let's get better at it." To that end, Blake wrote the book *Pivot: The Only Move That Matters Is Your Next One* to help people learn to take the small steps needed to constantly shift with change to keep moving forward in their careers.

2.5

Learn Constantly, Like Great-Grandma

I like to imagine how my husband's great-grandmother, Nam-Nam, would have reacted to a full throttle ride in a Tesla. After all, when she was young she rode in one of the original electric cars that could reach a whopping 14 miles per hour.

The change that Nam experienced in her lifetime was astounding. When she was born in 1901, the world was still in slow acceleration mode. But toward the end of her life, in the early 2000s, growth was (and it still is) like rapid acceleration in a Tesla. It's almost ludicrous! Yet,

even at age 100, Nam was up on the news and taking computer lessons. Nam-Nam's secret? She was always willing to learn something new.

NAM-NAM'S PRINCIPLES FOR THRIVING WITH CHANGE

Principle 1 **ASK, ASK, ASK**

Nam was curious and she wasn't afraid to ask. If there is something you don't know, just ask. And don't just ask Siri. Ask a real person like Nam would have done.

Principle 2 **ALWAYS BE LEARNING**

What have you learned lately? What do you want to learn tomorrow?

Principle 3 **KNOW HOW YOU LIKE TO LEARN**

In what ways do you learn most effectively?

Do you learn best when you:

- Listen?
- See visuals like charts and maps?
- Read?
- Use metaphors and analogies?

- Make a tangible product?
- Teach?
- Discuss with others?
- Pair ideas with music?
- Move around?
- Write?
- Doodle?

When you know how you learn best, you can incorporate these techniques more often and maximize your motivation for continuous learning.

2.6

Case Study: How Old Ideas Can Be Creative

By the 1980s, Yellowstone was in trouble. An overpopulation of elk had decimated its trees, plants, and grass. New thinking was needed to figure out a way to reverse the decay in the ecosystem.

The resulting “new” idea was to bring back the wolves who had been earlier eliminated from the park and who find elk delicious.

Within years, trees shot up and vegetation regenerated. Birds came back in abundance, along with beavers, rabbits, and mice. The tree growth diminished erosion and even the geography of the rivers changed for the better.³

Naturalists didn't clone a new species to solve the problem and they didn't douse the park with pesticides to spur plant growth. They actually returned the ecosystem to its original state.

But because they reversed "the way things had been done for a long time"—which involved dispelling a long-held fear of wolves—their solution can be a considered new, valuable, and therefore creative.

Story:

SHINOLA CREATES ARTISANAL WATCHES

Shinola has developed its own "artisanal" approach to manufacturing watches, leather goods, and even bicycles.

The company combines the latest technology with high-touch, personalized product assembly. Their watchmakers receive Swiss training and 30 people are involved in assembling a single watch.

Watchmaking as a trade has been around for centuries but for the most part, factories have taken over the job. By bringing back the "master craftsman" approach, Shinola created a new twist on an old idea and a compelling story that endears customers to its brand.⁴



**VISIT ONLINE
RESOURCES FOR:**

A video of the
Shinola factory tour.



**CHAPTER SUMMARY:
THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- Creativity helps us avoid getting disrupted and instead become the disruptor.
- Creative thinking can lead to “old” ideas applied under new circumstances.
- If you’re not comfortable with change, work on increasing your change tolerance.

