# The Creative Community Handbook:

*A Leap to Possibilities Thinking*

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# Foreword

*Our nation has rapidly transitioned from the age of industry and services to an information age. Today, our economy is based heavily on knowledge and its application, not the production of materials or products. In other words, ideas and information have become the goods of our society. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Knowledge is now recognized as the driver of productivity and economic growth. As a result, there is a new focus on the role of information, technology, and learning in economic performance."*

*A knowledge economy depends upon a creative and intelligent workforce, advanced scientific and technological industries, and rapidly evolving information and communication systems. All of this is occurring in the context of a highly dynamic global economy. According to the research of Dr. Richard Florida, these highly educated, creative, and mobile workers (and their employers) are choosing locales beneficial to their lifestyles and values versus merely competitive salaries.*

*Since the publication of Florida's book, "The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life," local quality of life and creativity are key to survival in the new global knowledge economy. Paradoxically, the game of global competitiveness seems to have become a very local, or at least regional, issue. For example, recognizing and developing the unique and stimulating assets of our communities has become more important than ever before.*

*The Michigan State University Community and Economic Development Program has over thirty years of experience in addressing the economic problems of communities throughout Michigan and seeks to help communities find their creative strengths. Recognizing that the role of technology is increasingly important to a healthy economy, the MSU-CEDP/EDA University Center seeks to help communities and industry, particularly those most economically vulnerable, to take an active role in preparing for this knowledge economy and overcoming the barriers to creating higher-skilled, higher wage jobs. Technology is strongly linked to the creation of higher-skilled, higher paying jobs.*

*While some communities are poised to respond to the global knowledge economy, others are ill prepared to move forward. Yet, to succeed as regions, we must learn new ways to involve the diversity, creativity, and capacity of ALL citizens.  I am reminded of the advice of Sir Francis Bacon, "If we are to achieve results never before accomplished, we must employ methods never before attempted."*

*This handbook is intended to assist communities as they strive to move forward in the knowledge intensive global economy.  Readers are also encouraged to visit our web page at [www.cedp.msu.edu](www.cedp.msu.edu) for other materials and active strategies in creating successful communities.*

*Yours in creativity and innovation,*


*Rex LaMore, Director*
*Community and Economic Development Program*
*Michigan State University*

## A note about the artwork

This Handbook uses drawings to represent the "leap" to creative possibilities thinking. Three symbols represent the many diverse ways of thinking about the world. All are valued in a creative context. Every view is important.
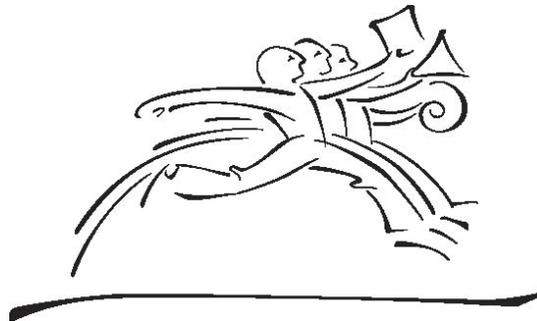
The more traditional square or "box" that we are told to "think outside of" is a traditional way of conceptualizing the world. While boxes may restrict creativity, some boundaries are essential. The triangle is a symbol that can mean top-down or discussion-based communication style that sometimes limits a group's creativity. Triangles are also strong and well-connected. Circles can stand for complete, whole, balance, and equality. How valuable is it to compare and contrast a triangle style for making a crucial decision with a circle format for opening and exploring fresh ideas?

Spirals can mean movement, change, and growth. Creative thinking strategies release the collective energies of a whole community. Opportunities and ideas surface as a group opens to possibilities. As thoughts are shared in a creative climate (with more and more appreciation and flexibility), the whole community's thinking begins to connect and incorporate more diverse ideas into the collective vision.

The human figure drawings represent every person, including every race, gender, disability, ethnicity, orientation, religion or lack thereof. We are inclusive in our thinking that all can live in harmony in community. Now we can learn to become creative together.

# Introduction

This **Creative Community Handbook** can help groups achieve success by opening up possibilities thinking. Thinking about possibilities means anticipating and imagining a future filled with new opportunities. It means beginning with collective dreams rather than problems. The pages that follow offer tips, tools and positive techniques to enhance levels of creativity in all types of groups: committees, boards, teams, organizations, and communities.

Readers will…
- Discover why creative communities are getting a lot of attention across the country — particularly from a business perspective;
- Be exposed to six creative strategies to nurture "The Creativity Climate;"
- Uncover a "A Creative Worldview" — a new paradigm that is changing the way people think, organize, and act;
- Find "Four Keys to Creativity" to rev up the creative process;
- Explore "Action Steps and Creative Leaps to New Possibilities;" and
- Receive additional "Resources" with valuable references for those who wish to delve deeper into creativity space.

The enjoyment of creativity is reason enough to get started immediately, but there are many other factors motivating communities to take a serious look at creativity. Below are just a few of the reasons.



## Creativity is Good for Business

Numerous studies point to the importance of creativity and innovation in successful businesses. For example, the London Business School found that 70% of organizations with a positive attitude towards innovation reported that they are outperforming their competitors (an additional 17% felt their performance was at least level with their competitors). These companies had also seen an increase in profits over past years as well as having a larger market share than their closest competitors.[1] See additional facts at: www.designcouncil.org.uk.

> *Innovation counts for 5 -15% of your company's annual revenue and most of your future growth and profitability. The implementation of quality processes and systems to support innovation is a management priority.*
> — Imaginatik.com

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[1] Bettina von Stamm and Riley, *International Journal of New Product Development and Innovation Management,* March-April 2003

## Change is Permanent

The business community has already embraced the reality of constant change. Daily shifts occur rapidly and continuously, directly impacting business interests, product and service design, and customer satisfaction. Creative thinking and design are now deeply embedded in the psyche of today's successful businesses and industries. Articles in mainstream publications like **Business Week** and **Fast Company** extol the virtues of creativity and encourage business and community leaders to foster an emerging creative culture. An example in the May 17, 2004 issue of **Business Week** has a cover story featuring "America's Leading Design Firm," IDEO, that has caused a multi-industry revolution by changing the context and process of service and product design.[2]

> *Design shapes a company's reason for being, it has become an undeniably transformative force in business and society.*
> **- Fast Company, June 2004**

Innovative communities that wish to succeed, improve their quality of life, and keep current with innovative business thinking can benefit from learning about, designing, and continuously improving their own creativity models. The IDEO is just one of many creative design firms that can help groups get started on a creative thinking path. The June 2004 issue of **Fast Company** (a publication born in November 1995 to feature and foster speed and creative thinking) has a cover story featuring "20 Creative Mavericks and What You Can Learn from Them." **Fast Company** lists several principles of the design revolution and profiles 20 Master Designers.[3]

## Healthy Economies Depend on Innovation

The ability to innovate has always been a key factor in successful businesses. Today, there is growing evidence that innovation is more significant for job growth and our economy than ever before.

> *The number of people doing creative work has exploded. Those in creative occupations – from engineers and designers to artists and writers to higher-end planners, analysts, managers, and other 'creative professionals' – now comprise more than 30 percent of the workforce, up from about 10 percent in 1900 and only 20 percent as recently as 1980.*
> - Richard Florida

Richard Florida's research[4] shows that economic development will be achieved best by tapping and harnessing human creativity and developing diverse, tolerant, and inclusive cities. Florida has found that creative regions generate more jobs, higher salaries, more innovations, and more growth in high-tech industries. He adds that this approach – harnessing creativity and developing diverse, tolerant, and inclusive cities – will provide a far greater return on investment than subsidizing big businesses with tax breaks.

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[2] Business Week, "The Power of Design", May 17, 2004, pp. 86-94. Also see: Kelly, T. (2001). *The art of innovation: Lessons in creativity from IDEO, America's leading design firm.* New York: Currency/Doubleday.
[3] Fast Company, "Masters of Design" June 2004, pp. 61-75.
[4] www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2003/0303.florida.html downloaded 3/16/04.

## Communities Stimulate Creativity

When two or more people come together, creativity is often greatly enhanced. One person's ideas inspire thoughts in another. A diversity of ideas, experiences, talents, and creative styles enrich and stimulate the entire group.

A study of 750 entrepreneurs revealed that "Entrepreneurs who spend more time with a diverse network of strong *and* weak ties – of family, friends, business colleagues, advisors, acquaintances, and complete strangers – are three times more likely to innovate than entrepreneurs stuck within a uniform network. "Diverse networks and sources of information encourage the diffusion of non-redundant information and thus stimulate creativity," says Stanford researcher Martin Ruef.[5]

> *Creativity grows in community with other creative people…. You don't find true creativity and personal satisfaction by isolating yourself from other people. Real creativity comes from, and gives back to, community.*
> **- Ron Huxley, Creativity Builders Group**

It appears that creativity and diverse communities are natural allies. According to Ruef, "Weak ties – of acquaintanceship, of colleagues who are not friends – provide non-redundant information and contribute to innovation because they tend to serve as bridges between disconnected social groups. Weak ties allow for more experimentation in combining ideas from disparate sources and impose fewer demands for social conformity than do strong ties." In other words, a broad range of relationships can foster creativity. But if all you do is hang out with close ties (family, co-workers, and friends) creativity may be undernourished.



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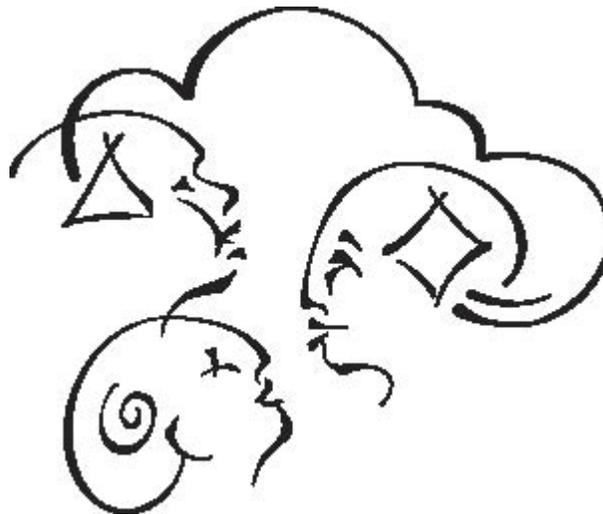
[5] http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/news/bmag/sbsm0305/ideas_ruef_networking.shtml downloaded 6/7/04

# The Creativity Climate:  Six Creative Strategies

In The Process of Creative Change, author Christine Egger provides a helpful explanation of creativity. Egger explains "The process of change, on the surface, looks like this: Something, someone, or some idea moves from point A to point B. According to some scientists and philosophers, the process of change involves another step where whatever is changing is in the process of changing, and not at A or B." [6]

> *There are two ways of being creative. One can sing and dance. Or one can create an environment in which singers and dancers flourish.*
> - Warren G. Bennis

This space could be called "C."  Egger suggests that we need to develop new ways of thinking, sensing, feeling, and communicating that relate to this in-between state (C). She borrows language from a Buddhist philosophy to refer to this in-between state (C) as "groundless," and suggests that the potential for making change does not lie with where we are grounded.  Egger suggests that our ability to be creative and create the future we desire (i.e. where we want to be grounded), lies in an ability to *get off the ground*.



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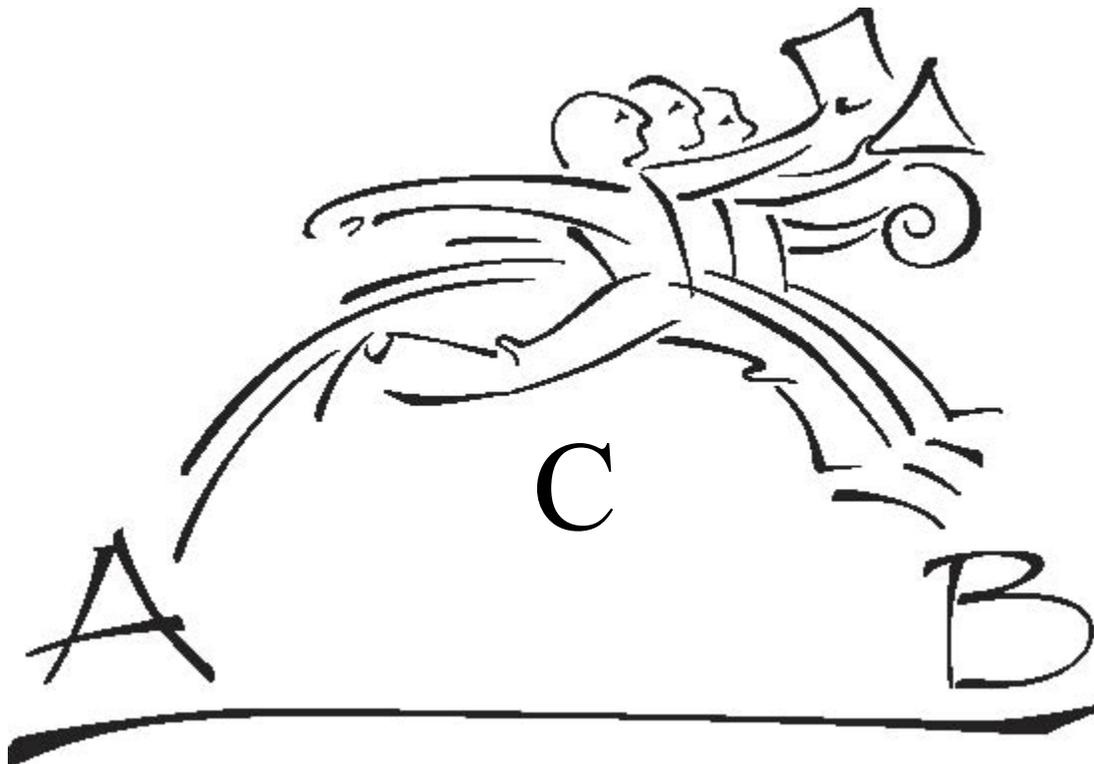
[6] An Untapped Resource:  The Mind/Body Connection a.k.a. The Process of Creative Change, Christine Egger, 2003.

It is a common belief that life in communities and organizations is all about bureaucracy and control.  People often develop a reactive mindset based on experiences with all types of officials, ordinances, rules and laws.  This attitude sometimes causes conflict with community and organization leaders when trying to bring people together to envision new future possibilities.  Citizens may tend to be reactive and rigid in their demands for maintaining the status quo.  Yet, a healthy and naturally growing community requires citizens and administration to learn to share their visions of the future and to foster a climate that is flexible and adaptable to ever-changing and evolving conditions in the environment.

One important way to enhance creativity is to tend to the creative climate.  A good climate helps people get off the ground into creative space.  For those looking for practical ways to stimulate creativity, consider attending to the creative climate by using these six creative strategies.



## Understand the Context!  Keep it Open and Inviting

A creative context is open, not narrow and constricting.  An open context allows participants to explore all possibilities without criticism or sanctions.  A shift to an open and inviting context gives meaning to action, avoids conflict and fosters adaptability.

- Imagine an ideal new context for the future to create a whole new set of possibilities that didn't exist before.  Being stuck in a "traditional thinking context" cannot create the "new chemistry" needed to change the community.
- Use "possibility thinking" and open-ended questions:  "What possibilities could we pursue?  What might our options be?  In what ways could we proceed?"

> *Who the he-- wants to hear actors talk?*
>
> **- Harry Warner, President of Warner Brothers Pictures, 1927**

- Focus on creative future capacities.  Do not start with old problems.  Avoid blame.  "What does our ideal community look and feel like?" is a good place to begin.
- Consider open-ended questions, like "In the future, how might we define our community?" rather than "What are the borders of our community?"

> ***Community Development Principle**:  Think about shifting the thinking context before trying to be creative.  Be open to using the full range of action strategies to work toward long-term community sustainability and well-being.*

# Grow a Learning Organization Culture

A Learning Organization Culture[7] can engage a team's creative thinking.  In a learning organization change is never considered a problem because the focus is on continually learning how to encourage natural growth.  Recognize that chaos is a natural process by which complex, living systems, including organizations, teams and communities, learn, renew, grow and energize themselves.

- Accept that some chaos is an essential element of creative thinking.
- Creativity is messy, complex, confusing, non-linear and unpredictable.
- Remember, the edge of chaos is the edge of learning and growth.
- Remain open to learning and continuous improvement.
- Focus on positive growth.
- Develop an insatiable hunger for open and positive dialogue.
- Adapt strategies that respond to the emerging chaos, issues, patterns and trends by opening-up dialogue, not closing it down to keep order.

> *I'm always thinking about creating. My future starts when I wake up every morning. Every day I find something creative to do with my life.*
> - Miles Davis

- Use non-linear thinking processes such as brainstorming and dialogue.

***Community Development Principle:***  Engage community members in learning about and understanding community issues and the economic, social, environmental, political, psychological, and other impacts associated with alternative courses of action.  Do not let some fears or discomfort with chaos suffocate the creativity of community members.

# Use "Information Chemistry"

View information as a catalytic force that informs and forms us.  It can energize and fuel healthy citizen participation.  Think of it as a new type of chemistry that can link people.  Good communication and information flow releases the collective energies of a group.  If anticipated and shared in advance, information can build trust and allow the freedom for genuine and timely participation without conflict.

- Share information with all of the people all of the time.
- Use a broad range of communication tools including the electronic (e-mail, listservs, webs, etc.), written, verbal, etc.  Be a chemist, mix ideas and information.
- Be patient.  Suspend judgment.
- Make requests rather than demands.  See more on non-violent communication at *www.cnvc.org*.
- Appreciate the variety of creative styles and "intelligences" (see the *Learning Styles*).

> The shortest communications training course in the world:
> 1) Ask; 2) Listen
> - Christie Mason

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[7] In *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Peter Senge describes learning organizations as "organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together."

# Foster Involvement and Inclusion

Genuinely involve everyone in the process and visioning. Create the future together by helping people create an open mindset that allows ideas to flow naturally.

> The best way to control your cow is not to control. Offer instead, a large spacious meadow.
> - Confucius

- Invite representatives of the whole system into the design process.
- Ask everyone to focus on the future and create an ideal vision to work on.
- Allow all members of a group or team to participate in the visioning.
- Choose to work on things that people can accomplish through partnering.
- Invite the team(s) to take action: to go do those things they decide to do.
- Conduct an After-Action-Review to assess learning and results. Celebrate success and learning. View "failure" as learning.
- Ask what people learned from the experience and what they would change.
- Encourage all to refine their work processes, eliminate conflicts, waste, etc.
- Invite the group to continuously review and revise the system. Focus on future possibilities, making changes as needed to refresh the vision and renew focus.
- Continuously improve relationships and trust. Celebrate.
- Choose meeting times and locations that are accessible, comfortable, and user-friendly. Provide food, refreshments, and even childcare.

***Community Development Principle:*** *Promote active and representative participation toward enabling all community members to meaningfully influence the decisions that affect their lives.* [8]

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[8] Visit the Community Development Society's website at www.comm-dev.org .

# Share a Vision to Grow Mutual Identity and Trust

Shared Vision is an invisible force that brings excellence to people and organizations. To build a mutual identity, teams, partners, customers, clients, and communities must grow their levels of trust and responsibility. If a vision means something to citizens, it becomes a "Strange Attractor" of meaning. The vision becomes a force that "attracts" and bonds people within a shared community identity and energizes them to action.

- Nothing exists unrelated to something else; remember, relationships are all there is.
- Invest time and energy in growing trusting relationships among all constituents.
- Embrace diverse opinions as a path to a unified, holistic, and shared vision. Ask, "Where can we find common ground and a new beginning point?"
- Remove barriers that prevent people from sharing and growing identity and trust.
- Design systems to enhance shared community identity, not difference.
- Celebrate success in terms of shared identity, relationships, and new thinking.
- Measure and improve trust levels and working relationships with everyone.

> ***Community Development Principle:*** *Incorporate the diverse interests and cultures of the community in the community development process; and disengage from support of any effort that is likely to adversely affect the disadvantaged members of a community.*

*Include the identity of every individual in every organization change process.*
*- Margaret Wheatley*
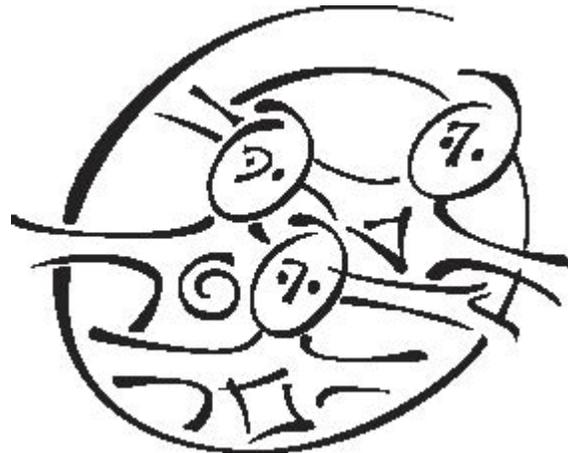
# Release Squelching Behaviors

Each person can tend to the creative climate.  One can nourish the soil of creativity and plant seeds of possibility.

- Nurture the seemingly impossible, new, unexpected, and unpredictable.
- Don't kill creativity with phrases like "Yes, BUT!…."
- Avoid phrases like:  *"That'll never work,"  "Be real," or "We've tried that already."*
- Avoid judgmental behavior including those non-verbal glances that cut ideas down.
- Encourage even wild and radical ideas as you all try to fit them into a larger mosaic.
- Be willing to be wrong.  We are all just learning at the edge of chaos.
- Accept and encourage experimentation and even failure. Many creative ideas and successful ideas have failed miserably at one time or another.
- Understand a variety of modes of creative expression (*see learning styles* on p. 14).

> ***Community Development Principle:***  *Work actively to enhance the leadership capacity of community members, leaders, and groups within the community.*

Ask "What's possible?"  not "What's Wrong?"  Keep asking.
- Margaret Wheatley



*The key is to squelch the squelchers.*
- Jane Jacobs

# A Creative Worldview

As you read the previous section, you begin to see that fostering creativity may conflict with other values that we hold dear: control, predictability, and clockwork precision. A Creative Worldview requires an acceptance of paradox; things really do exist side by side as complete opposites. We recognize this when we keep community controls in place while fostering an attitude of openness, creativity, and flexibility.

Some of the greatest strides in creativity and significant change can occur in organizations when there is a change in commonly held assumptions. This is also called a change in the worldview (or paradigm). A creative worldview represents a significant shift from the old industrial age "world-as-machine" paradigm. The traditional mechanical worldview is fragmented. It is about pieces, parts, cause and effect, control, predictability, and form.

> *Every person takes the limits of their own field of vision for the limits of the world."*
> **- Arthur Schopenhauer**

The creative worldview looks at life as a series of growing relationships, patterns, possibilities, emerging conditions, and processes. It concentrates its energy on mindfulness of connections and responsive processes that foster healthy growth.

The following chart compares and contrasts the new and old paradigms:

| New Worldview (creative thinking context) | Old Worldview (traditional thinking context) |
|---|---|
| Living system | Machine |
| Creative | Routine |
| Thrive on uncertainty and ambiguity | Value certainty and predictability |
| Indeterminate | Determinate |
| Emphasis on relationship | Emphasis on separate working parts |
| Integration | Fragmentation |
| Participatory Universe | Subject-Object Split |
| The whole is more than the sum of its parts | Parts completely define the whole |
| Emergent | Reductive |
| Potentiality | Actuality |
| Contextual and self-organizing | Isolated and controlled |
| Bottom-Up Leadership | Top-Down Management |
| Trust | Control |
| Imaginative and Experimental | Reactive |
| Both-And | Either-Or |
| Cooperation | Competition |
| Power with | Control over |

Traditional thinking organizations may still respond to rapid change by resisting and slowing down the change process so everything can be planned and organized completely.  They say "people need time to understand and get used to what is happening around them."  When growth is happening every moment of every day, these outmoded and sluggish business systems do not work very well.  In fact, this may be the least efficient way of processing rapid and continuous change.  They cause the people involved to feel overwhelmed and the systems to lag farther and farther behind the rest of their industry.  Many organizations are learning this the hard way.

> *Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.*
> *- Helen Keller*

Because the world around us is shifting at a continually increasing rate, this old cultural mindset may not be healthy for communities either.  A new cultural norm is needed that helps systems grow and allows them to evolve creatively and consistently while anticipating new growth opportunities and shifting priorities.  This is a gradual shift — a "living systems mindset" — that emerges and grows as things in the environment morph and shift.

Creativity and innovation can be viewed as a positive mindset to help people caught up in the swirls of change.  Creativity can increase flexibility, adaptability, and success in individuals, teams, organizations and communities with which they are involved as owner/collaborators.  Ultimately, a creative worldview, climate, and tools will improve our capacity to appreciate the present, create a positive future, and enjoy the spaces in between.

"Four Keys of Creativity" provide an opportunity to gain some first-hand experiences in the world of creativity.  Paradoxically, these approaches will not only help groups think out of the box, birth new ideas, and appreciate possibilities — they can also help groups find direction, improve efficiency, and produce results. If the climate is open and inviting for growth, fresh ideas and new systems ripen over time and produce abundant results.

# Four Keys to Creativity

The authors have selected a few popular "creativity tools" that can be useful in unlocking and unsquelching creativity.  To help readers remember them, we've chosen labels that start with the first four letters of the alphabet.  These include:

- **A**ppreciation
- **B**rainstorming
- **C**oncept Mapping
- **D**ialogue
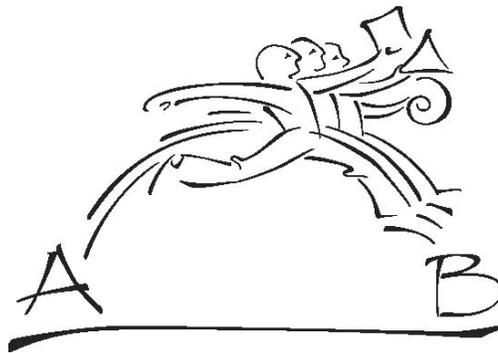


The authors' experiences suggest that the vast majority of groups that engage in these processes find them beneficial, productive, and energizing. These tools can uncover opportunities, build relationships, open new roads to success, transform communities, breathe life into programs, increase profits, add a little fun and excitement, and

_____
*(insert desired outcome here).*

Once you've discovered how "productive" these tools can be, it will be much easier to justify spending more time on processes that initially may look frivolous or distracting. All types of groups can benefit including boards, schools, staff, government, church, teams, businesses, coalitions, associations, and even families.

> *You cannot mandate productivity….*
> *You must provide the tools to let*
> *people become their best.*
> **- Steve Jobs**

# A. Appreciation

Appreciation is a great way to kick off a creative process. Typical problem-solving approaches begin with problems: "What's wrong?" "How do we fix it?" "What's missing?" *An appreciative approach takes a different route.* Appreciative questions sound like: "What's working?" What do we currently have in place?" "What's possible?" and "How do we make it happen?" Proponents of appreciative approaches suggest that creative change builds from where people and organizations are, inspired by hopes, dreams, and passions. People are more likely to realize their capacity for change and creative action as they become aware of interests, strengths, assets, and diverse perspectives.

<u>Appreciative Inquiry</u>
Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is one popular method that is used by organizations and communities to create positive change. (See more on AI at <u>http://ai.cwru.edu/</u>).

**Practice:**
*For an experience in AI, ask your group these three questions below. Then use tools in the following sections (brainstorming, concept mapping, and dialogue) to expand on and eventually refine your plans for the future.*

1. *What's working?*
2. *What's possible?*
3. *How could we make it happen?*

*If you are working with a large group, consider dividing into small groups or pairs. Take notes and bring the results back to the large group to share and discuss.*

## Appreciate Personal Learning/Creative Styles

Another appreciative technique involves identifying and developing people's learning styles and modes of creative expression.  Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences can help people recognize, appreciate, and encourage each other's learning styles, and modes of creative expression.[9]

| Learning style | Creativity expressed through… |
|---|---|
| Linguistic | Talking, hearing, seeing, reading, writing, telling stories, and memorizing names, places, dates, and trivia. |
| Math/Logic | Categorizing, classifying, working with patterns and relationships, experimenting, problem-solving, figuring things out, working with numbers, asking questions, and exploring patterns and relationships. |
| Musical/Rhythmic | Singing, humming tunes, listening to music, playing an instrument, picking up sounds, remembering melodies, noticing pitches/rhythms, and keeping time. |
| Visual/Spatial | Visualizing, dreaming, drawing, building, designing, daydreaming, looking at pictures/slides, watching movies, playing with machines, imagining, sensing changes, doing puzzles. |
| Body/Movement | Touching, moving, interacting with space, processing knowledge through bodily sensations, moving around, touching, talking, using body language, doing physical activities and crafts. |
| Interpersonal | Sharing, relating, cooperating, interviewing, being with friends, dialoguing, joining groups, understanding people, leading, organizing, communicating, mediating, and taking care of others. |
| Intrapersonal | Working alone, self-paced learning, having enough personal space, understanding self, focusing inward on feelings/dreams, following instincts, pursuing personal interests/goals, and being original. |
| Naturalist | Identifying, categorizing, collecting, recognizing, sorting, and organizing. |

**Practice:**  *Ask your group to review this list of learning styles and to share a positive or enjoyable experience involving one or more of these "intelligences."  Note:  This makes an excellent icebreaker.*

Option
*Ask people to tell stories about their experiences with creative intelligence.*

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[9] http://www.pz.harvard.edu/PIs/HG.htm

Appreciate Community Assets

Every person, organization, and community has unique assets, qualities, and capabilities.  Appreciating assets provides a positive first step towards creative change.

The alternative — starting with what's missing (with problems) — is a problem.  John McKnight, co-director of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute, suggests that society has become overly-dependent on social service systems to fix deficiencies and diseases.  Bombarded with deficit language and images, people begin to see the world through "Woes-colored glasses."  Asset appreciation reverses this trend.

> *There are no problems - only opportunities to be creative.*
> - Dorye Roettger

Community assets include organizations, the natural environment, the built environment (roads, buildings, etc.), financial resources, people, and knowledge base. In addition, community assets include those things that are harder to see -- sense of community, sense of place, community identity, level of civic engagement, pride, and creativity.

**Practice:**  *List the assets in your community.*

*Note:  See the next section for more on brainstorming.*

Options

- Do the same for a neighborhood, workplace, or community directory.  This could include a list of "Where to go" resources and information sources such as this directory.

- Brainstorm a list of personal assets, interests, gifts, talents, and skills among your group.

- Brainstorm a list of cultural assets, mores, and growth options available to grow creativity.

# B. Brainstorming

Brainstorming is one of the most popular creativity tools. It can be used by an individual or a group any time that a large number of creative ideas are desired. It can also be used in conjunction with other creative processes such as appreciation, concept mapping, and many others.

**Guidelines for brainstorming**
- Don't criticize or evaluate ideas.
- Record all ideas.
- Think freely and take risks.
  Be constructive and creative.
- Think of as many ideas as possible.
- Build on the ideas of others.

**Practice:** *To conduct a brainstorming session…*

1. *Review the guidelines for brainstorming.*
2. *State the question and time period (5 - 20 minutes, more or less depending on the topic). Note: One way to begin is to brainstorm topics or questions to brainstorm.*
3. *Take turns sharing ideas.*
4. *Record ideas where all can see them. Ideas can come rapidly in waves, so it is helpful to have two recorders and poster paper or chalk boards to record on.*
5. *Make sure that all ideas are understood by those involved.*
6. *Ideas can later be grouped, "mapped," discussed, and prioritized. It may not be desirable to rank or prioritize topics. You may choose to use "sticky dots" or a show of hands. (If you choose to prioritize certain ideas for immediate action, do not criticize or put-down the other ideas you leave on the table. It ruins creative climate.)*

Options
- Use pictures and words when recording ideas.
- Put ideas on Post-It™ notes. This can aid in grouping ideas later.
- Post the question and notes in an accessible location and invite people to add ideas to the list over a period of a day, week, or even month.
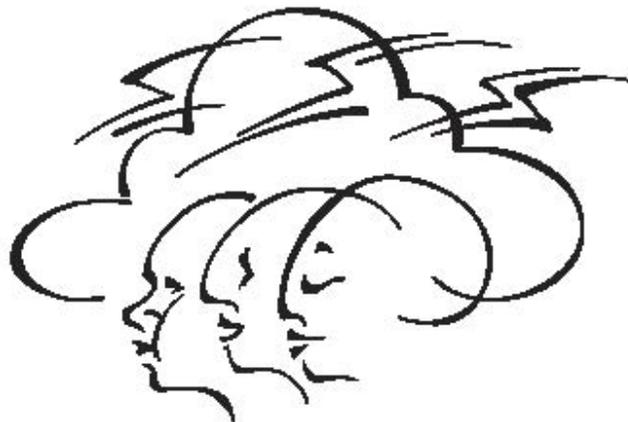
# C. Concept Mapping

Concept mapping is a creative tool that is useful for many purposes including brainstorming, note-taking, shopping lists, and project management.  It is a fun and helpful way to organize ideas and discover new connections and possibilities.

Software programs are available to assist you.  The authors have used Inspiration™ (see www.inspiration.com) and the FutureScape®planning process (see www.complexsys.org/futurescape.htm).



**Practice:**  *Choose a topic or issue and make a concept map. Visit the links below for a handy 8-step guide to concept mapping.*[11]

Tony Buzan, the "Father of Mind Mapping," offers the following comparison between concept maps and road maps:

"Similarly to a road map, a Mind Map will:
- Give you an overview of a large subject/area.
- Enable you to plan routes/make choices and let you know where you are going and where you have been.
- Gather and hold large amounts of data for you.
- Encourage problem solving by showing you new creative pathways.
- Enable you to be extremely efficient.
- Be enjoyable to look at, read, muse over and remember.
- Attract and hold your eye/brain.
- Let you see the whole picture *and* the details at the same time.
- Assist YOU!" [12]

See examples of mind maps and concept maps at www.mind-map.com.

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[11] http://www.thinksmart.com/mission/workout/mindmapping_intro.html (downloaded 6/8/2004)
[12] www.mind-map.com (downloaded 6/8/2004)

# D. Dialogue

In simple terms, a good dialogue is a very creative conversation.  Some have described dialogue as "people truly speaking to people truly listening."  The emphasis is typically on listening and exploring ideas together rather than winning an argument or making a decision.  Discussion and debate require people to take sides.  Once they divide up into sides of an issue, creativity goes out the window.

The table below contrasts dialogue with discussion/debate[13]:

| Dialogue | Discussion/Debate |
|---|---|
| Ask questions and learn | Justify and defend |
| Explore multiple perspectives | Argue one perspective |
| Question assumptions | Defend assumptions |
| Suspend judgment | Judge right or wrong |
| Share power with others | Control others |

It is important to share information about dialogue circle guidelines in advance (i.e. elements of dialogue, tips, etc.).  If dialogue is new to the group (or if power issues are a concern), select a facilitator (or co-facilitators) familiar with dialogue to establish and preserve a "creative climate."  Participants are encouraged to listen and refrain from dominating the conversation.



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[13] from Discovering Dialogue, by LeRoy Harvey, 2002.

**Practice:**  *Have a dialogue!*

**Consider these guidelines to help develop the dialogue…**

- Sit in a circle, leave titles and status at the door – this creates a sense of equality.
- Connect the rim of the circle by inviting participants to open on a positive note.
- All ideas are valid; suspend judging, criticism, sarcasm and non-verbal put-downs.
- Obtain a talking stick (or other object) before speaking, and pass it around the circle.
- Speak when moved to speak.  Limit your comments to a 1-3 minute maximum.
- Avoid monopolizing the conversation.  Speak again only after everyone else who wants to speak.
- Allow several seconds of silence after someone has spoken.
- Focus on the future capacity building, not on describing past problems.
- Convert "problems" to opportunities for an ideal resolution by describing how it should be in the future.
- If the dialogue moves to a back-and-forth discussion, the facilitator (or other group member) may suggest a pause and/or reflection on process.
- Review qualities of a Creative Climate.
- About 10-15 minutes before the agreed meeting time ends, it is helpful to invite people to share a parting comment or reflection. This can be a point about the issue(s) discussed or thoughts about the process and/or the dialogue.
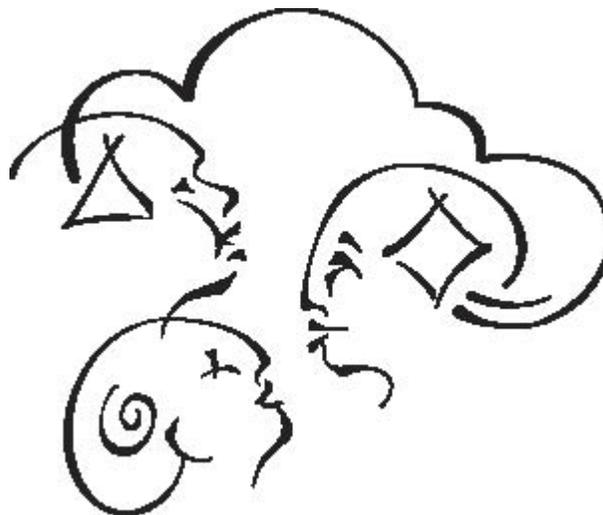
> *The most important work in the new economy is creating conversations.*
> - Alan Webber, Editor
> Fast Company magazine

# Action Steps: Creative Leaps to New Possibilities

## Creativity in Groups

Assuming that there is a shared interest in creativity, there are several places to begin. One obvious step is to think creatively about creativity. Apply the tools and processes in the previous section to develop a unique and personalized action plan! Remember, attend to the context of the meeting first. Keep the climate open and inviting.

Plan meetings (or part of a meeting) to begin a creative adventure. For example, use the A,B,C,D approach:

## Appreciate
- Who is interested in enhancing creativity?
- When do you feel creative?
- What are the individual creative/learning styles of each person?
- Where do creative opportunities exist in the organization/community (times, places, groups, etc.)?
- What are some times when we felt most creative together?
- Who/what are resources that could help us enhance creativity now?

## Brainstorm
- How might we enhance our personal creativity?
- What are some ways we might be more creative together?
- How might we proceed?

## Concept Map It
- Create a concept map of creativity with your group, i.e., who, what, when, where, and why does creativity happen? Use pictures, colors, and group involvement to create the map.
- Make a concept map to capture and connect the ideas generated above during your appreciative and brainstorming phases.

## Dialogue
- Engage in a dialogue about creativity.
- Reserve time in meetings to engage in open-ended conversation.
- Dialogue about the process. How did it go? How might we engage next time?

## Creativity in Community

Many communities have launched creative visions for the future.  Because citizens tend to support visions that *they help create*, your community might consider developing its own evolving statement of principles and action steps.  The *Memphis Manifesto*, written at the first national gathering of the Creative Class by the Creative 100, provides a starting point. [14]

## The Memphis Manifesto

1.  Cultivate and reward creativity. Everyone is part of the value chain of creativity. Creativity can happen at anytime, anywhere, and it's happening in your community right now. Pay attention.

2.  Invest in the creative ecosystem. The creative ecosystem can include arts and culture, nightlife, the music scene, restaurants, artists and designers, innovators, entrepreneurs, affordable spaces, lively neighborhoods, spirituality, education, density, public spaces and third places.

3.  Embrace diversity. It gives birth to creativity, innovation and positive economic impact. People of different backgrounds and experiences contribute a diversity of ideas, expressions, talents and perspectives that enrich communities. This is how ideas flourish and build vital communities.

4.  Nurture the creatives. Support the connectors. Collaborate to compete in a new way and get everyone in the game.

5.  Value risk-taking. Convert a "no" climate into a "yes" climate. Invest in opportunity-making, not just problem-solving. Tap into the creative talent, technology and energy for your community. Challenge conventional wisdom.

6.  Be authentic. Identify the value you add and focus on those assets where you can be unique. Dare to be different, not simply the look-alike of another community. Resist monoculture and homogeneity. Every community can be the right community.

7.  Invest in and build on quality of place. While inherited features such as climate, natural resources and population are important, other critical features such as arts and culture, open and green spaces, vibrant downtowns, and centers of learning can be built and strengthened. This will make communities more competitive than ever because it will create more opportunities than ever for ideas to have an impact.

8.  Remove barriers to creativity, such as mediocrity, intolerance, disconnectedness, sprawl, poverty, bad schools, exclusivity, and social and environmental degradation.

9.  Take responsibility for change in your community. Improvise. Make things happen. Development is a "do it yourself" enterprise.

10. Ensure that every person, especially children, has the right to creativity. The highest quality lifelong education is critical to developing and retaining creative individuals as a resource for communities.



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[14] http://www.memphismanifesto.com  downloaded 5/2004.

Another helpful list of possible action steps is *Recommendations for Michigan's Future*, developed by Michigan State University Urban Planning students Merideth Ball, Landon Bartley, and Harry Burkholder.[15] :

## *Recommendations for Michigan's Future*

### Lifestyle
- Using incentives encourage high-return industries, such as technology firms, to locate in the city. Example: Smart Zones
- Adopt policies that encourage grassroots entertainment, live music, and constant mental stimulation.
- Approve bachelor's-degree incentives, e.g., residents with bachelor's degree receive tax incentive to start businesses.
- Make navigable waterways accessible to canoe, kayak, rowboats, windsurfing, etc.
- Preserve and expand existing trailways and outdoor recreation areas, with downtown access and connections to suburbs. Trails should accommodate walking, running, biking, rollerblading, and cross-country skiing in the winter.
- Locate campus facilities, especially residence halls and sporting venues, close to downtowns.

### Social Interaction
- Encourage "third place" businesses such as coffee shops, recreational centers, musical venues.
- Create a focal point (strip) that is the center of cultural experiences in the city.
- Allow for live music to be played late at night.
- Build wider sidewalks to accommodate outdoor seating for restaurants.
- Expand farmers' markets downtown.

### Diversity
- Encourage ethnic restaurants, a wide variety of entertainment options with open-door policies.
- Openly celebrate cultural and racial diversity with many kinds of events, multicultural festivals, etc.
- Promote living & business opportunities to ethnic news outlets and other media.
- Create citywide effort to monitor for discrimination by lenders, realtors, landlords, etc.

### Authenticity
- Offer unique and original experiences in downtowns, stay away from cookie cutter commercial strips.
- Promote authenticity with historic preservation and main street programs.
- Use a three-question historic building rating system.

### Identity
- Promote an artistic and musical identity. Provide incentives for music industry.  Example:  Motown.
- Communicate closely with neighborhoods and community organizations.
- Recruit and actively involve the community in decision making.
- Promote historical festivals and unique-to-Michigan events.

### Quality of Place
- Balance the built environment with the natural environment.
- Build a pedestrian-friendly city for use by residents, not solely according to business demands.
- Zone downtown areas to include single-occupant loft or studio housing.
- Build and promote mass transit.

> Creative thinking may mean simply the realization that there's no particular virtue in doing things the way they have always been done.
> - Rudolf Flesch

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[15] These recommendations were developed in the Fall of 2003 in Urban Policy Analysis (UP 848; Rex LaMore, Instructor).

# Concluding Thoughts and New Beginnings

Building a creative community and creative culture won't happen overnight.  Author and organizational consultant Gareth Morgan offers "the 15% Solution."  Morgan suggests that most people only have about 15% control over their work situation, so it is very important to know where that influence lies and remain open to opportunities that emerge.  His book, *Imaginization,* can help organizations chart a creative journey.

This handbook is a small, yet powerful set of creative ideas and tools to inspire the imagination.
We hope to hear about *your* creative journeys.  The authors and the staff of MSU-CEDP invite you to share your stories, successes, struggles, questions and resources related to creative communities.

> *We must be the change*
> *we wish to see in the world.*
> — Gandhi

Please send them along to creativeteam@leroyharvey.net  or mail your ideas to:

MSU-CEDP
1801 W. Main
Lansing, MI  48915

With your permission, we will include them in a future newsletter, report, or version of this publication.  Thank you for working to create healthy community futures!

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> What everyone knows is what has already happened or become obvious.  What the aware individual knows is what has not yet taken shape, what has not yet occurred.  Everyone says victory in battle is good, but if you see the subtle and notice the hidden so as to seize victory where there is no form, that is really good.
> — Sun Tzu

# Resources

**ASSISTANCE**

**MSU Community and Economic Development Program**
CEDP is committed to developing and applying knowledge to address the needs of society – primarily urban communities.
www.cedp.msu.edu
517-353-9555


**MSU Statewide**
MSU's statewide resource directory provides listings of people, projects, and units involved with learning, discovery, and engagement in Michigan communities
http://msustatewide.msu.edu


**LeadNet/MSU Extension**
MSUE helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical needs, issues, and opportunities.
http://web2.canr.msu.edu/leadnet/



**BOOKS**

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## Internet Resources

### Michigan

#### COOL CITIES
www.coolcities.com
Visit the State of Michigan's Cool Cities website.  Check out the "Resource Toolbox" with information about assistance for community improvements from over a dozen State departments.

#### COOL SURVEY
www.michigancoolcities.com
The State of Michigan developed an online survey to explore "what's cool" and what might attract and retain existing and potential Michiganders.  Over 13,000 people have responded, describing the factors most important to them in choosing a place in which to work or live.

#### SMART MICHIGAN
www.smartmichigan.org
MSU CEDP helped create the Smart Michigan website to foster economic and social development through policies and plans that harness the many opportunities of the knowledge-based information age.

### Other

#### BOOTSTRAP INSTITUTE
www.bootstrap.org/
The Bootstrap Institute has the goal of boosting individual and organizational ability to better address problems that are complex and urgent.

## CO-INTELLIGENCE INSTITUTE
www.co-intelligence.org
C.I. works to further the understanding and development of co-intelligence. It focuses on catalyzing co-intelligence in the realms of politics, governance and cultural evolution.  C.I. researches, networks, advocates, and helps organize leading-edge experiments and conversations in order to weave what is possible into new, wiser forms of civilization.

## CREAX.NET
www.creax.net
This is a great site for information (including software) on innovation and creativity.

## CREATIVE AMERICA PROJECT
www.creativeamerica.us
The Creative America Project is currently a volunteer effort aiming to encourage artists and creative professionals to vote in 2004 and to run for office in 2006. They are in the process of organizing a Steering Committee and are seeking volunteers to help spread the word about the project.

## CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DAY
http://creativityday.org
Creativity and Innovation Day was founded on June 1, 2001 to encourage people all over the world to use their creative capacities to make the world a better place and to make their place in the world better too.

## THE CULTURAL CREATIVES
http://www.culturalcreatives.org/
As of the year 2000, there were 50 million adults in the United States with the worldview, values and lifestyle of the Cultural Creatives.

## FUTURESCAPE®
www.complexsys.org/futurescape.htm
This is Irene Sander's website at the Washington Center for Complexity and Public Policy FutureScape is a tool for combining insight and foresight, two skills needed for "planning in the midst of complexity and change."

## IMAGINIZATION
www.imaginiz.com
This site is the Gareth Morgan web site. It features his books, articles and insights on organization creativity and change.

## INNOVATION WATCH
http://www.innovationwatch.com
Innovation Watch is an attempt to explore the dynamics of an emergent future, through the lens of history and the insights of complex systems science.

## THE RICHARD FLORIDA CREATIVITY GROUP
www.creativeclass.org
A thriving music scene, ethnic and cultural diversity, outdoor recreation, a great nightlife. These are all amenities attracting the young professionals becoming known as the "Creative Class." Richard Florida's book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, details how these people are building cities known for innovation and creativity and how this can be a new economic development strategy.

**Software** (from a collection of links at www.creax.net)

- Z**IdeaCue:** www.ideacue.com
- **Solutions Genie:** www.brainstormingdss.com
- **Windows Graphical Brainstorming Tools:** http://john.redmood.com/brainstorming.html
- **Axon Idea Processor:** http://web.singnet.com.sg/~axon2000/index.htm
- **BrainStormer:** www.jpb.com/creative/brainstormer.html
- **ConceptDraw MINDMAP:** www.conceptdraw.com/en/
- **Creative Thinkware - Resources:** www.kikm.org/thinkwave.htm
- **Creator Studio:** www.compxpressinc.com/
- **eThink (Kepner Tregoe) :** www.kepner-tregoe.com/ethink/eThink.cfm
- **Groupsystems:** www.groupsupport.com/EN/products/groupsystems.shtml
- **Idea Generator:** www.projectkickstart.com/html/idea.htm
- **Ideafisher:** www.ideafisher.com
- **IdeaMap:** www.i-novation.com
- **IdeaProcessor:** www.a-i-a.com/
- **Idon:** www.idonresources.com
- **Imagination Engineering:** www.cul.co.uk/software/imeng.htm
- **Innovation Toolbox:** www.infinn.com/boxdownload.html
- **Inspiration:** www.inspiration.com
- **Maxthink:** http://maxthink.biz/start.htm
- **Outliners:** www.outliners.com
- **Paramind:** www.paramind.net
- **Serious creativity:** www.sixhats.com
- **Software for writers:** www.masterfreelancer.com/wspage1.html
- **TechOptimizer:** www.invention-machine.com
- **The Literary Machine Software:** www.sommestad.com/lm.htm
- **Thoughtpath:** www.thoughtpath.com
- **ThoughtStream (Palm) :** http://thoughtstream.org
- **TreePad:** www.treepad.com
- **VisiMap:** http://coco.co.uk/prodvm.html
- **Xerotron:** www.xerotron.com

**Weblogs on creativity and innovation**

- **IdeaFlow:** www.corante.com/ideaflow
- **Imaginatik Corporate Innovation Blog:** http://imaginatikresearch.blogspot.com
- **Don The Idea Guy Brain Blog:** http://dontheideaguy.blogspot.com/
- **Pure Content:** http://www.purecontent.blogspot.com
- **Creative Generalist:** http://creativegeneralist.blogspot.com/

**More Organizations**

- American Creativity Association http://www.amcreativityassoc.org/
- Basadur Simplex http://www.basadursimplex.com
- Center for creative leadership http://www.ccl.org/
- Center for Studies in Creativity http://www.buffalostate.edu/centers/creativity/
- Centre for Management Creativity http://www.changeandinnovation.com/
- CREA (Creativity European Association) http://www.creaconference.com/eng/frameset.htm
- Creative Education Foundation http://www.cef-cpsi.org/
- Creative Problem Solving Group - Buffalo http://www.cpsb.com/
- The Alden B. Dow Creativity Center http://www.northwood.edu/abd
- The Creative Thinking Association of America http://www.thinkoutofthebox.com/
- The Creativity Association for Women http://www.cowboy.net/~mcgoff/tcawv11.htm
- The European Association for Creativity and Innovation http://www.eaci.net/

**Suggest a link for a future edition of this publication:**
Mail to LeRoy Harvey at leroy@leroyharvey.net and/or John Victory at victorygroup@voyager.net

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**Publications on the Internet**

**ASSET-BUILDING**
http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/codevpubs.html

**COMMUNITY INCOME AND EXPENDITURES MODEL (MSU-CEDP)**
http://www.msu.edu/~cua/projects/CIEM%20Project.htm

**THE CREATIVE COMMUNITY - FORGING LINKS BETWEEN ART CULTURE COMMERCE & COMMUNITY**
http://www.smartcommunities.org/creative/CreativeCommBroFINAL.pdf
"At the heart of this effort is recognition of the vital role that art and culture play in enhancing economic development, and ultimately, defining a "creative community"—one that exploits the vital linkages between art, culture and commerce, and in the process consciously invests in human and financial resources to prepare its citizens to meet the challenges of the rapidly evolving post-industrial, knowledge-based economy and society."

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANUAL**
http://web2.canr.msu.edu/LeadNet/Publications/grcdmanual.pdf
This is written for Grand Rapids but is helpful for many urban and rural neighborhoods.

**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY HANDBOOK (MSU-CEDP)**
http://www.msu.edu/~cua/web%20pdf/sustain1-11.pdf

**More at resources available at**
www.cedp.msu.edu