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Waikato Management School
Te Raupapa



If Creative Thinking Techniques Are So Great, Why Aren't They Used More?

Actor-Observer Differences in Assessing Creativity

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Abstract

Creativity is at a premium in marketing and a myriad of creative thinking techniques have been suggested to supply this needed imagination. Despite this, advertising agencies and product development departments rarely seem to have taken up these various techniques, often even looking down on those who do. To explain this disconnect between research and practice, we identify several problems that obscure our ability to understand the effectiveness of creativity techniques. First, almost all academic research into the effectiveness of creativity techniques has been performed on students, but these techniques are not as effective for industry professionals. Second, creative thinking techniques clearly have effects when observed independently, but those using the techniques have a hard time seeing them. Finally, independent judges have problems assessing creative work when the work presented to them is poorly elaborated - which is not uncommon when ideas are at a formative stage of development. To illustrate these effects we present an experiment undertaken on both professional and student samples that compares creatives', account executives' and students' self-reports to independent judges' assessments. Sometimes the different perspectives match, but other times they diverge. Student self-reports are often wildly inaccurate, but problems also arise in the self-reports of industry professionals; account executives and creatives. Judges can be inaccurate as well, especially when the material they have to assess is not highly elaborated. To explain why techniques aren't more used, one aspect is that users have a hard time seeing the effects, but also researchers may also overstate the positive benefits of these techniques, especially when using student samples.

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