

Creativity: What Does it Mean to You?

What is creativity?

Creativity means different things to different people. The dictionary defines creativity as “having the ability or power to create; characterized by originality and expressiveness; imaginative.”¹ Linus Pauling said “the best way to get a good idea is to get a lot of ideas.”² Frank Capra said creativity is “a hunch trying to tell you something.”³

Creativity. It’s a word you hear a lot in marketing. Everyone wants it. Lots of people try to come up with it. But creativity means different things to different people. What you consider as creative may not get the same reaction from others: your peers, management, or agencies working with you.

Given that, you probably wouldn’t find it surprising that creative work sometimes doesn’t match up to a marketer’s—or management’s—view of creativity. So what can you do?

To get everyone on the same page, it can be helpful to compare your idea of creativity with your management, your agency and your staff. To start the comparison, try breaking creativity into categories. Then you can rank those categories (see the worksheet on the back). The model below uses seven characteristics of creativity to demonstrate how this idea works.



Creativity means different things to different people. What does it mean to you?



This creativity model can help marketers decide if their view of creativity matches up to others working with them.

¹ “The American Heritage Dictionary,” 2nd edition, 1991.

² Lewis, J. “Wisdom Quotes: Quotations to Inspire and Challenge.” Available at www.wisdomquotes.com, 02/06.








³ Mohler, K. “Webster’s Electronic Quotebase,” 1994.

What Do You Want Your Creative To Be?

When you think of creativity, what goes at the top of your list? Rank in order each of the following characteristics from 1 to 7 (1= most important, 7= least important). **Only use each number once** (even though you'll probably want to make everything a "1"). Then have your management and your agency do the same. You may gain insight into how they view creativity. Remember, there really are no right or wrong answers. What matters is finding out if you, your agency and others working with you view creativity the same way.

Creativity Characteristics

Rank in order each of the following characteristics of creativity from 1 to 7 (1= most important, 7= least important).

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Unusual/dramatic: How important is wacky, bizarre or out-of-the-box creative? Do you value creative that exaggerates or overstates for emphasis and effect? *If these are very important to you, rank this close to a 1.*
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Attention-getting: How important is creative that gets audiences to literally stop and take notice? Some would say, "If I can't get their attention, all is lost." Attention-getting may be more important with an ad than a brochure handed out by sales reps who personally introduce the creative in a way that commands attention. *If gaining your audience's attention is a concern, move this up the list.*
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Interesting: How important is it to compel audiences to go beyond just the creative to seek more information about your company, product or service? *Can you succeed if you get the audience's attention but they don't care to read on?*
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Unique/original: How important is one-of-a-kind creative? Some people insist their creative be original. After all, it is "creative." *If getting creative you or anyone else has never seen before seems most important, you'll want to rank this highly.*
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Attractive: How important is visually appealing creative? Sometimes people think of creative as more or less a beauty contest. Although beauty may only run skin deep, that doesn't stop people from chasing after it. Others evaluate attractiveness by high-quality production standards. *Some people are satisfied with beauty. Nothing else matters. How about you?*
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On-brand: How important is staying loyal to your company or product brand? Many, if not most, marketers think branding has great importance to their creative. *If going outside your brand guidelines is forbidden, rank this closer to a 1. If you're willing to accept creative that isn't as close to your brand, rank this somewhere down the list.*
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Understandable: How important is presenting information that's easy for audiences to reach your intended conclusion? With technical and scientific products, many would say this is hardest to accomplish. Those people would say, "Without understanding, everything else is wasted." *If this is how you think, rank this closer to a 1.*

What does it all mean to you?

When your view of creativity matches up to those working with you, you can often get to a satisfying solution quicker and more efficiently. Although creativity tends to be subjective, breaking it down into categories and analyzing it may help you understand why people don't always agree about what creativity means.

Your ranking	Your boss's ranking	Your agency's ranking
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Why rank instead of rate?

Ranking forces you to prioritize each characteristic. No ties are permitted. Everything can't be equal. Ranking recognizes this. Granted, it's more difficult than making everything a "1". The payoff? You'll likely learn more about what creativity means to you.

To find out how 5MetaCom views creativity, give us a call.