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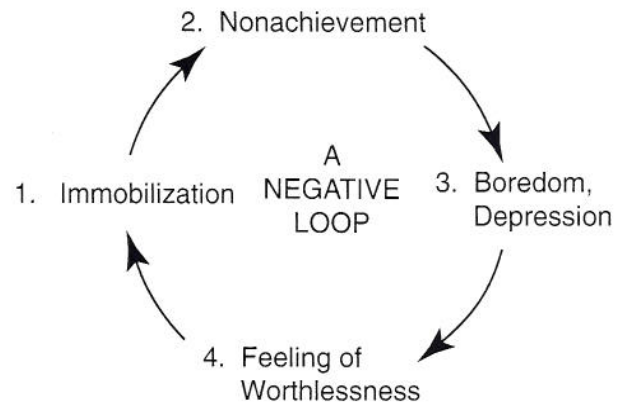
GOAL SETTING

As humans, our behavior is strongly goal-directed. Every action occurs for a reason. When we focus our attention on a specific task, we can channel our energy and better manage our time. When we reach our goals, our self-esteem increases, which then helps us overcome obstacles. And, with each goal met, our knowledge increases. Michael LeBoeuf has diagrammed this effect clearly (5.1).

A Goal-Setting Strategy

Self-knowledge is essential. To be effective, goals must be authentic. No matter how hard we try, we can never really fulfill our potential when pursuing goals set by others. Identifying our true interests, strengths, and objectives can be liberating. The following exercise can help clarify personal interests.

1. Get a package of small Post-it notes. Working spontaneously, write one of your characteristics on each note, such as "I am creative," "I love music," "I write well." Identify as many attributes as possible.
2. When you finish, lay out the notes on a table and look at them for a while. Consider the type of person they describe. What are this person's



5.1 Michael LeBoeuf, *Imagineering*, 1980. Achievement feeds self-confidence while nonachievement induces inertia.

strengths? What additional interests might this person need to develop?

3. On a fresh stack of notes, write a new set of responses, this time dealing with the question "Why not?" as an expansion of these interests. Why not travel to Tibet? Why not learn Spanish? Why not master canoeing? Add these to the grid.
4. Then, leave the room. Go for a walk, have dinner, or head to class. Let your subconscious mind play with the possibilities suggested by your notes.
5. Next, organize the notes into four general categories: intellectual goals, personal-relationship goals, spiritual or emotional goals, physical fitness goals. If you are an extreme safe-keeper, add a category called "Adventure." If you are an extreme risk-taker, add a category called "Organization." Since a mix of activities helps feed the psyche, working with each of these categories is important.
6. Choose one goal from each category and develop an implementation strategy. Be specific! "I want to become a better artist" is too vague. Consider specific actions you can take to improve your artwork. "I need to improve my drawing" is better. "I want to learn anatomy" is better still. To learn anatomy, you can take a class, study an anatomy book, or draw from a skeleton. These are tangible actions: you now know what to do.
7. Prioritize your goals and develop a rough timetable, listing weekly goals, semester goals, and one-year goals. It is not necessary to list career goals just yet. Most of us explore many ideas during our first year of college, and formalizing career goals prematurely

is counterproductive. After you are clearly committed to a major field of study, you can add a page of long-term goals, projecting your priorities for the next three to five years.

8. At least once a month, review your chart and add or delete information as necessary. If you realize that you are overextended this term, shift one of your minor goals to next semester. This system is intended to provide clear targets, not to create a straitjacket. Make adjustments as necessary, making sure that your primary goals are met.
9. If you achieve all your goals, congratulate yourself — then set more ambitious goals next term. If you achieve half of your goals, congratulate yourself — then prioritize more carefully next term. You may have taken on too many tasks and thus dissipated your energy. Because there is always a gap between intention and outcome, a 70 to 80 percent completion rate is fine.

Characteristics of Good Goals

Challenging but Attainable

Too modest a goal will provide no sense of accomplishment. Too ambitious a goal will reduce, rather than increase, motivation. No one wants to fight a losing battle! Knowing your strengths and weaknesses will help you set realistic goals.

Compatible

Training for the Boston Marathon while simultaneously trying to gain 20 pounds is unwise, since you will burn off every calorie you consume. Trying to

save a thousand dollars while touring Europe is unrealistic, since travel always costs more than you expect. On the other hand, by taking a dance class or joining a hiking club, you may be able to combine a fitness goal with a social goal.

Self-Directed

Avoid goals that are primarily dependent on someone else's actions or opinions. "I want to earn an A in drawing" is a common example. Since the grade is determined by a teacher, your control in this area is limited. Instead, focus on improving your drawing as much as possible. This will increase your receptivity to learning and will focus your attention on actions you can control. When you do your best work, good grades generally follow.

Clearly Defined

We all have "too much to do." No matter how carefully we organize our time, there are only 24 hours in a day. Identifying daily and weekly priorities can help focus attention, increase productivity, and reduce stress.

1. Identify your target. It may be a specific action (such as doing your laundry) or a broader intention (such as improving your knowledge of anatomy). Specificity is important. It is nearly impossible to hit a target you cannot see.
2. Focus. Reduce distractions as much as possible. If visiting friends have taken over your living space, plan another time for socializing, then chase them out. If you need music to improve your concentration, plug in your favorite tunes. If you can't seem to focus due to an assortment of worries, try writing them down; then refocus on the task at hand. Getting worries off your mind often helps.
3. Then, hit your target with the necessary force and energy.

Temporary

Set clear target dates, get the job done, and move on to the next project. Each completed task increases your self-confidence and adds momentum. By contrast, unfinished work can drain energy and decrease momentum. If you are overloaded, delete secondary goals, so that you can complete primary goals.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management can help you achieve your goals. Working smarter is usually more effective than simply working harder. In a world bursting with opportunity, using your work time well can increase the time available for travel, volunteer work, or socializing. The following time-management strategies have been used by many artists and designers.

Set the Stage

Choosing when and where to work can significantly increase your output. If you are a lark, bursting with energy and enthusiasm early in the morning, tackle major projects before noon. If you are an owl, equipped with night vision and able to hunt after dark, work on major projects after dinner. If you are distracted by clutter, clean your desk before beginning your workday, and tidy up your desk before you leave. These seemingly minor actions can substantially increase your productivity.

Prioritize

Use your goal list to help determine your priorities. Note which tasks are most *urgent* and which tasks are most *important*. Timing can be crucial. When you pay your phone bill on time, you easily complete an urgent but unimportant task. When your phone bill is overdue and the service is cut off, this unimportant task becomes a major headache. Dispense with urgent tasks quickly so that you can focus on more important issues.

See the Big Picture

Use monthly calendar pages to record your major projects and obligations. A calendar that is organized by months can help you see which weeks will be packed with deadlines and which weeks will be relatively quiet. To avoid all-nighters, distribute large, important tasks over several weeks. To avoid missing a pivotal lecture or critique, schedule out-of-town trips during "slow" weeks.

Work Sequentially

Many activities are best done in a specific sequence. If you are writing a 20-page paper, it is best to start

with research, make an outline, complete a rough draft, make corrections, then write the final draft. If you are designing a poster, it is best to start with research, make thumbnail sketches, assess the results, make a full-size rough layout, consult the client, and *then* complete the poster. Trying to cut out the intermediate steps and move directly to the final draft is rarely effective. With most large projects, you learn more, save time, and do better work by following the right sequence of events.

Use Parts to Create the Whole

Seen as a whole, a major project can become overwhelming. In an extreme case, creative paralysis sets in, resulting in a condition similar to writer's block. Breaking down big jobs into smaller parts helps enormously. In *Bird by Bird*, Anne Lamott gives a wonderful description of this process:

Thirty years ago my other brother, who was ten years old at the time, was trying to get a report on birds written that he'd had three months to write. [It] was due the next day. . . . He was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother's shoulder, and said, "Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird."³

By doing the job incrementally, you are likely to learn more and procrastinate less.

Make the Most of Class Time

Psychologists tell us that beginnings and endings of events are especially memorable. An experienced teacher knows that the first 10 minutes of class sets the tone for the rest of the session and that a summary at the end can help students remember the lesson. Similarly, the wise student arrives 5 minutes early for class and maintains attention to the end of class.

Be an active learner. You can use that 5 minutes before class to review your notes from the previous session and organize your supplies. This helps create a bridge between what you know and the new information to be presented. Try to end the class on a high note, either by completing a project or by clearly determining the strengths and weaknesses of

the work in progress. By analyzing your progress, you can organize your thinking and provide a solid beginning point for the next work session.

Start Early

Momentum is extremely powerful. It is much easier to climb a hill when you are already moving forward, rather than reclining. When you receive a long-term assignment, such as a 20-page paper, start it right away. Even one hour of research will help focus your attention on the problem and get you going. A slow start is better than no start!

When in Doubt, Crank It Out

Fear is one of the greatest obstacles to creative thinking. When we are afraid, we tend to avoid action and consequently miss opportunities.

Both habit and perfectionism feed fear. If you consistently repeat the same activities and limit yourself to familiar friendships, you will become more and more fearful of new experiences. Perfectionism is especially destructive during brainstorming, which requires a loose, open approach.

Creativity takes courage. As IBM founder Thomas Watson noted, "If you are not satisfied with your rate of success, try failing more." Baseball player Reggie Jackson is renowned for his 563 home runs—but he also struck out 2,597 times. Thomas Edison's research team tried over 6,000 materials before finding the carbon-fiber filament used in lightbulbs.

"When in doubt, don't!" is the safe-keeper's motto. "When in doubt, do!" is the risk-taker's motto. By starting each project with a sense of adventure, you increase your level of both learning and creativity.

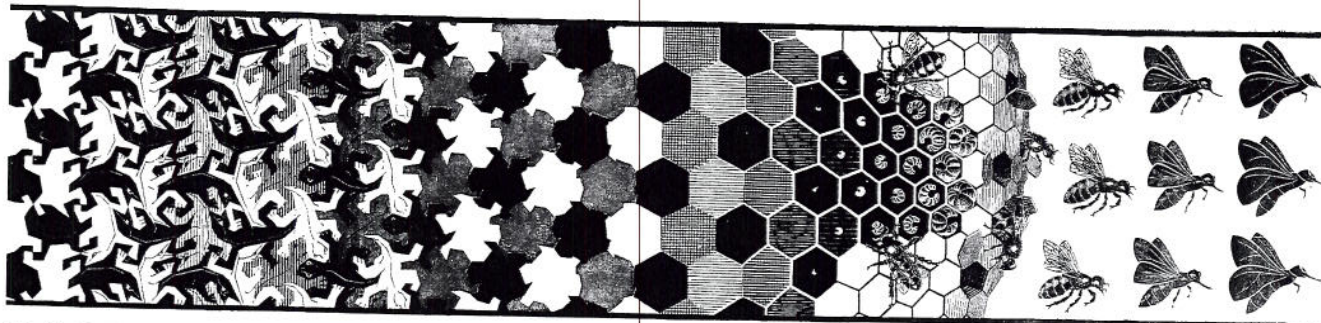
Work Together

Many areas of art and design, including filmmaking, industrial design, and advertising design, are often done collaboratively. Working together, artists and designers can complete projects that are too complex or time-consuming to be done alone. Collaborative thinking helps us break familiar patterns and teaches us to listen to alternative or opposing ideas.

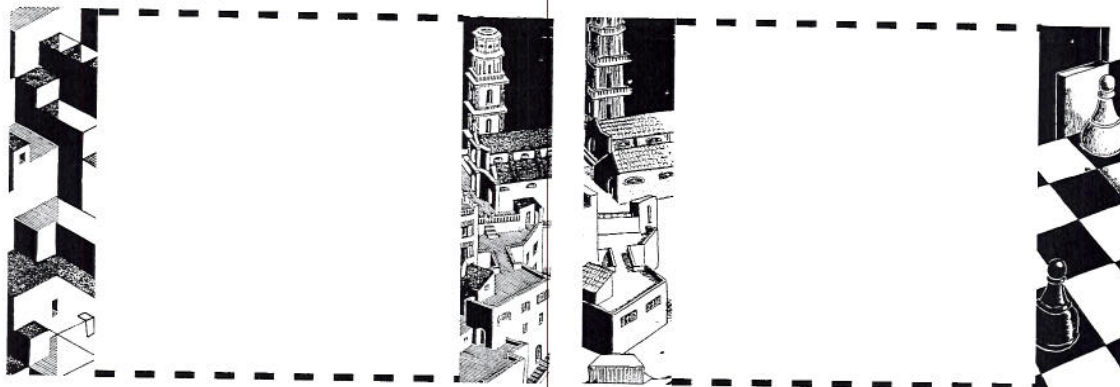
Here is one example. Gather 20 people. Start with a copied fragment from an existing image, such as *Metamorphosis II*, an 8 × 160 in. banner by

M. C. Escher (5.2). In this case, design students were provided with a 1-inch strip of the banner to create a beginning point and another 1-inch strip of the banner to create the ending point (5.3A). Each person invented an $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ in. connection between the two strips. Buildings, plants, chess pieces, and other images were used to bridge the gap between the strips at the beginning and the end. The images were then connected end to end, like cars in a train. When combined, they created a collaborative banner, 20 feet

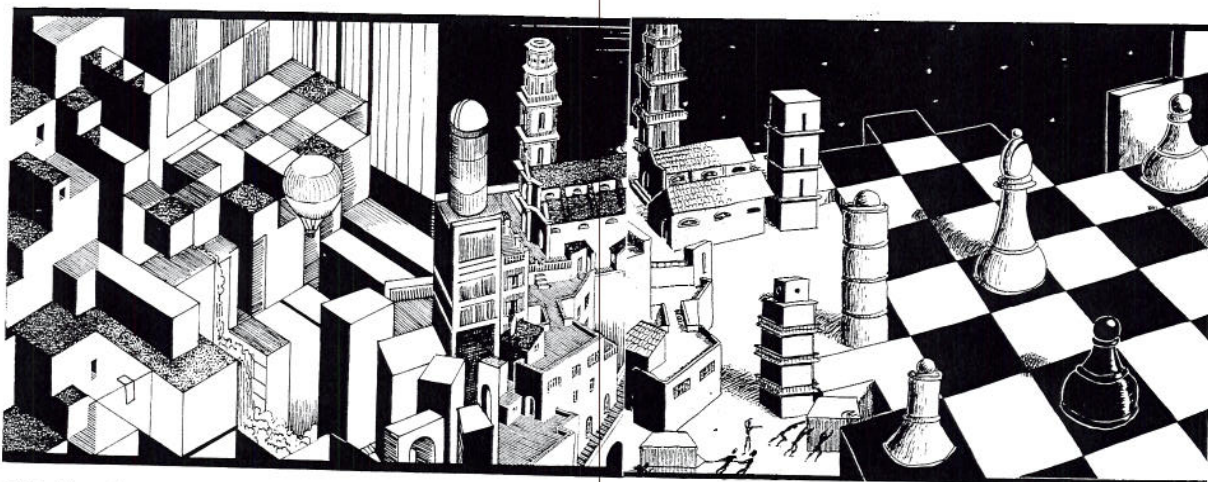
long. One piece of the banner is shown in figure 5.3B. Students had to negotiate with the person ahead of them in the line and with the person behind them, in order to make a continuous image with graceful transitions. In effect, all 20 participants become members of a creative team. Finally, each $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ in. section was photocopied and traded, providing each person with the completed artwork. In a collaboration of this kind, everyone gains, both in the learning process and in the sharing of the product.



5.2 M. C. Escher, Part of *Metamorphosis II*, 1939–40. Woodcut in black, green, and brown, printed from 20 blocks on three combined sheets, $7\frac{1}{2} \times 153\frac{3}{4}$ in. (19×390 cm). © 2002 Cordon Art B. V. Baarn, Holland. All rights reserved.



5.3A Examples of Escher Starter Images.



5.3B Mary Stewart and Jesse Wummer, Expanded Escher Collaboration. Student work.

Habits of Work

Constructing a sculpture, designing a poster, or writing a story are labor-intensive: there are no real shortcuts. To provide beginning designers with a realistic list of targets, Professor Rusty Smith and his colleagues in the School of Architecture at Auburn University have developed a list of “habits of work” for architects. It emphasizes:

Self-Reliance

Essentially, self-reliance creates an active approach to work. Rather than waiting for directions or blaming others for delays, each architecture student actively generates possibilities, weighs benefits, and makes choices. To a substantial degree, self-reliant students drive their own learning process.

Organized Persistence

Beating your head against a brick wall is an example of mindless persistence. It is impressive, but ineffective. Chiseling away at the mortar between the bricks until the wall falls apart is an example of organized persistence. It may take weeks, but eventually organized persistence results in a solution. It gives us the ability to prevail, even when faced with the most daunting task.

Daily Practice

Momentum is extremely powerful when you are working on a difficult problem. Daily practice helps maintain momentum. For example, when learning a new computer program, practicing for a couple of hours each night is better than working one full day a month.

Appropriate Speed

Some tasks are best completed quickly, with brisk decision making and decisive action. Slowing down to re-frame a question and weigh alternative solutions is necessary in other cases. Knowing when to speed up and when to slow down is one mark of a “master learner.”

Incremental Excellence

Most art and design problems are best developed in a series of stages. Ideas evolve, skills improve, compositions are distilled. Rather than trying for

the “perfect solution” on the first day or work, it is better to start with a “funky junky” draft.

Valuing Alternative Viewpoints

Listening to others, understanding diverse points of view, and considering alternatives expands our capacity to solve a wide variety of problems. Even when the advice is off base, we can often use the idea as a springboard into a fresh approach.

Direct Engagement

Talk is cheap. Work is hard. The only way to solve most art and design problems is to get involved. You will never win a race when you are standing at the sidelines!

SUMMARY

- Creativity and design both require new combinations of old ideas.
- Creative people are receptive to new ideas, are curious, have a wide range of interests, are attentive, seek connections, and work with great conviction.
- A combination of rational and intuitive thinking feeds creativity. While intuition may be used to generate a new idea, logic and analysis are often needed for its completion. As a result, the actions of creative people are often complex or even contradictory.
- Goals you set are goals you get. Establishing priorities and setting appropriate goals will help you achieve your potential. Good goals are challenging but attainable, compatible, self-directed, clearly defined, and temporary. Deadlines encourage completion of complex projects.
- Completing tasks in an appropriate sequence, making the most of each work period, maintaining momentum, and reducing stress are major aspects of time management.
- Collaborative work can help us expand our ideas, explore new fields, and pursue projects that are too complex or time-consuming to do alone.
- Self-reliance, organized persistence, daily practice, appropriate speed, direct engagement, valuing alternative viewpoints, and incremental excellence are effective habits of work.