

Creative Event Concepts Need a Process

by Tiffany Markman, award-winning copywriter, in collaboration with 360 Degrees

Here's a quick summary of my position on event concepts:

1. There is, or should be, a structure to coming up with creative concepts for events, otherwise you're just playing the lottery every time you try to generate fresh ideas.
2. I use my Micro-Focus Methodology. (I present keynote talks, half-day workshops and training programmes on this; [drop me a line anytime](#) for more info.)
3. But before using Micro-Focus, I begin with the "boring" stuff: the desired outcome, target attendees, and parameters (size, budget, venue, time, style, purpose). Then, and only then, is it time for brainstorming, research, collab, refining, paring down, refining and so on.
4. Between and within all this, there are four creativity-boosting competencies that work for me (and the 13,578 others in Prof. Robert Epstein's University of California research study).

Here's how to use the four creativity-boosting competencies:

The four core competencies are:

1 Capturing and preserving any new ideas that occur to us so we can retrieve them later

- A fellow copywriter once told me that she carries a small notebook and pen wherever she goes, old-school-like, for "capturing the tinsel".

2 Challenging ourselves to take on difficult tasks, while managing the fear of failing

- My husband introduced me to the Japanese concept of [misogi](#), where you "[t]ake on challenges that radically expand your sense of what's possible. There are just two rules: you have a 50% chance of success at best, and it doesn't kill you..."

3 Broadening our experiences and knowledge outside our current areas of expertise

- What's ancillary to your niche? What's adjacent to your sector? When you spend time exploring the spaces outside your sphere of interest, you become a more rounded thinker.
- Take up a hobby that's unrelated to your profession. This provides a mental break *and* encourages the development of new neural connections.

4 Seeking out novel stimuli in our physical surroundings or social environments

- You might work from different locations or rotate among different offices or desks.
- You might engage with different cultures, languages, and environments, which will widen and deepen your worldview.
- What about seeking to expand your social circle, to include people from different backgrounds and with unfamiliar perspectives?

Epstein claims that practising these competencies makes us more imaginative and innovative.

So what now? Choose one of Epstein's four. Describe your commitment to a colleague or friend and ask for support (or company). As you develop your competency, document the process – capturing benefits that emerge as a result. You can even [tell me about it](#) ;)