

the creative process

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By Mario Ogas

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The Creative Process

Hello! My name is Mario Ogas (I am one more worker writing e-zines to `illustrate' the world wide web).

I've been working the last 12 years or so, in web & graphics design jobs: teaching at university and also as webmaster (in argentina) until 2003...now I've moved to Brazil and, as an internet dependant like I am, has my own Web Design & Internet Services Company ( [www.artandata.com](http://www.artandata.com) ) on wich I'm so proud of.

Time ago some friends and business related people I know told me that It would be a good idea to write technical letters on the subjects I know (mostly by every day working challenges) to help other people on their needs given them tips and information.

The point was: "I do not have the time to do this ! ". So the years have passed out...I'm my own boss...so I (like a boss) said to me (as the employed of myself that I am) "Mario, got a job for you...sit down at your desktop and do not move your ass from that chair until a nice first technical letter is cooked out of the oven. No matter the theme or subject ;) I know you're good for choosing the thing..."

So ....as my boss asked me: "I'm sitted here until this letter be done and published". Let's go to the subject that I've choosen to be the first:

AD Banners: The Creative Process

If you, like I do, are a webmaster, web designer or your job is somehow related to advertising and promoting goods or services on Internet, may be that you need to create your own AD Banners ( or at least have to get the idea of what the hell you want showed on that banner to explain to the person that will perform the hard job). Of course you can always go the alternative way that is: call a well known Design Company, pay a fortune or a half and let them perform the whole job while you rest in a park, looking the clouds and the sky for a couple days until your banner is ready.

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If you think this last alternative fits you ok, quit reading this e-zine and contact artandata. Hahaha just teasing !

If you're still here I need to explain (the best I can) how I and my collaborators walk (sometimes run and others climb) the Creative Process:

First, you've got the problem to be solved, because without a need for an AD Banner you probably won't be much interested on this tutorial.

So, you've got a problem...but also you've got ( or you can research for ) a lot of information that can trigger your creativity.

Better than words are examples so I'll explain on a real case study:

"...my site offers courses on design but most people told me that they can't find the information on those courses in the site. How can I solve this problem...can you help me ? ..."

the former paragraph has the expression given by the client but It has no tips for solutions only describe the problem and sometimes you have clients that don't even know exactly which is the problem, in this case "they only describe symthoms but don't recognize the desease".Like that patient that goes to the doctor saying "oh doctor, I'm so f...ill !!! if I touch here my stomach...if I touch here my neck also pains...again if I touch by here my knee pains. What a hell is happening in my body? I've never see a desease so rare and killer !"

then, the doctor said : "don't worry my friend. What you have it's not so rare: **YOU BROKE YOUR FINGER !!!!!** "

Some other times they give a diagnostic approach wich is wrong like "my car has some problem in the break because it always cross red ligths..."

(back to the tutorial).

Here, really starts our Creative Process !

The first thing you have to do is "write down the problems" I mean get a peace of paper ( or open a word doc) and put in a written sentence only the problem. The best you can. Like:

"most people can't find the information on courses in the site."

We have isolated and described the problem. Great ! Now we have to detect the cause of the problem because not always the solution is an AD Banner. ( It could have to change the punctured tyre! )

Possible causes are:

The user writes a wrong URL on his/her browser

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The hosting server is sometimes down  
The link pages (or some of them) to the information have broken links to.  
The information is hidden for the home page  
The information is hidden to many clicks down from the home page  
There are some other choices that wouldn't be considered, like:

The user has no connexion to internet  
The user is blind  
The page exists but the owner didn't realised that the information doesn't.  
Most of your clients lie.  
Etc, etc.

In this point we better go to the site and try by ourselves to find out which is the reason that better fits. I won't explain here how to test the URL because I suppose you know how. We can discard the first cause quote before hand unless the URL is something like:

<http://www.myzisipilinky.com.uk/tryTotYpeThsURL/coursersOnDesingProgram.htm>

(don't try it. It won't work):

In wich case the solution is to make a redirect page easier to be written.

Once broken links are discarded we have to center attention on the last two possible causes. In this case study `both of them' are true ! ( you'll see the page and the solution banner! be patient ! )

So we can evaluete possible solutions:

Move the program course page to be the site's home page (no way ! )  
Move that page one or more levels up so it isn't so hidden any more (this could improve somethig but not all)  
Put a text link on the home page ( sounds reasonable, isn't it ?)  
Put a pop-up or pop-under window on the home page (also good)  
Put an AD Banner on the home page. ( smiles & applauses ! )  
Last three possible solutions are what we can suggest to our client. So call him/her explain and let decides the best. (you know pros & cons of each solution to explain to the client)

You've got it ! our client has chosen the last opt. !

Diving into the Creative Process Itself

Stages:

### ANALYSIS

Collect information on the subject to be advertised  
Collect information on the Company Design (typography, colors, style, etc)  
Ask your client for ideas

### DESIGN

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BrainStorm for a while

Define the banner contents & features

Look for resources

IMPLEMENTATION

Development

TESTING

Testing

Validate

Publish

Bill your client and enjoy the payment J

Show other clients (or friends ) your masterpiece (just to exercise your proudness)

Collect information on the subject to be advertised

Any way to find information it's OK. Evident ways are:

Ask your client

Visit the page you're to build the banner for.

Search internet for subject related pages of the kind

Search books, media, etc

Ask your friends, collaborators, etc

Include in your search gathering any other way you think it'd be fine.

Now, what we collect this kind of information for?

The answer is just because without this baggage we, probably make a wrong AD Banner or a banner that's out of focus and easily could be improved.

Suppose we are mechanics and we are told to construct a car for a race. If we do not collect adequate information we'll be sending a Ferrari F1 to compete to the Dakar–Paris Rally. (poor Ferrari F1) or to send a 4x4 big tyres turbo engined Ford F–350 to the next Interlagos Grand Prix with no chance to win there (but the driver will enjoy so much to see how many F1's goes away by the horizon) J

Inquiring your client, visiting the client's site and specifically the page to advertise for you'll find lots of usefull information to step on. Don't miss them.

You can also consult books and magazine.

Collect information on the Company Design (typography, colors, style, etc)

Tips given for subject collect applies as well for Company Design Information gathering. But, in this case we focus on design and art items like:

Corporate Image Style

Corporate Colors

Corporate Site

Layout

Site tipography (family, color, styles, etc.)

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Visual Resources used (shapes, lines, etc.etc.)

I hope you can understand what I mean: If you're creating a banner just for a friend...let's say a teen-ager that loves skating... may be you don't have a "Corporate Image Style"...but your skatter friend has a site, a personal site that conciously or not was made under some kind of rules (even if it seems to be absolutely randomic, disordered, unpredictable,etc. You'll find putting it under the Lens that there is a wirl case of design rules or layout.

Ask your client for ideas.

Now you can collect information directly from your client. May be you wonder why I didn't include this task in the first item (collecting information on the subject) or into the second (collecting information on the Company's Design. Have a reason !

You can ask your client any time, but if you do that first, it's probably like you won't get good information because you:

Didn't see the company site and named pages

Do not have much knowledge on the subject

Understand now why I left this task until this point ? great ! J

BrainStorm for a while

After you put down on paper or powerPoint all the information formerly taken, is time to sit down around the round table with your collaborators (like Arthur and his Knigth) and brain storm your brains !!!

You can find lots of pages explain how to brainstorm (I found 827.000 matches at google for this word) so I have nothing more to say on brainstorm.

Define the banner contents & features

And now the cooking !

After the brainStorm process you have an idea of the contents the AD Banner will have, so the hardest part is done ! J

But my own experience indicates that there is a feedback corridor between desing and implementation stages.

Let's take this same case for example:

After brain storm we clearly decide to make : an animated banner with pictures on school classes containing links to the courses program page.

Look for resources

Taking the definition sentence for the banner and it's contents & features you need to look for the resources. I mean :

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Phrases or slogans to put in the banner  
Images, pictures or photos  
Making the storyboard (only for animated banners)  
Creating the timeline and the timing  
Choosing the right size for the banner  
Choosing the style, layout and typography to be used  
Determining the banner location on the page  
Some other stuff..

Well...I said before that there is a feedback corridor. In this banner project I had to change or saying it better increase the definition sentence after the search for visual resource (images & and photos) for the banner.

I had to find royalties free photos of classrooms, students, teachers, and so on to include. I found some in my own library but it wasn't enough to make me happy. Then I went to my favorite search engine and tried out some words like class.jpg, school.gif, teacher.jpg,etc,etc.

It's not necessary to say that I found lots of pics (in this point is good idea to say that you have to be sure the pic you're downloading is freeware. Not registered or limited on use)

What happened ?

Searching the pics I discover a pic of `South Park Children at school` that triggers again my imagination and said to myself: "the definition sentence is NOW changed to `an animated banner with pictures on school classes & cartoon (south park) pics containing links to the courses program page"

As you can see the sentence didn't change soooo much but the final result is absolutely different from the original idea because all the work is on the South Park basis.

That why I say that you needo to be alert while you are into any stage or task in the process for getting any other idea, resource, fact, etc that appears on the fly and could be fine for the project. Don't be afraid to dig into the changes or modifications needed in the project, they will improve the final creature

!

## IMPLEMENTATION & TESTING

When you enter this stages the Creative Process is likely to be done.

Sometime will occur that you need changes on the project but rarely this changes are due to Creative affairs, mostly the obey to client defined reasons like " ok guys, taxes in this state have raised so the new price to show in the banner is \$120 instead of \$ 29 that we have at the banner" J

This happens. Or I also need to put my banner into a banner ex-change program and it's so big...to much expensive for the program...please reduce it to the 1x1 px size" (microscope size oftenly cost about \$10 –100 for impressions wich result cheap enough for anybody ---- hahaha - just teasing)

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Of course there are lots of other considerations to be resolved but those are beyond creative process and are clearly technical driven decisions (may be in some other letter I write on those specifications)

Lastly, as I promised I give you the whole url of the page containing the banner:

Campaign name: Back to School

Author: ARTANDATA

Type: AD Banner

Size: Button #1 ( H:120px W: 90px )

Client: For Company Use (published)

Publishing period: 15/03/2004 to [not defined]

Go to the page

Final words:

Well, if you had been so patient to keep reading until this point I really don't know how to thank you for that. One thing I can do for you is to give you my own e-mail address so you can inquire (free of charge , of course) on any doubt or question you have on this reading. I'll promise to reply an answer (this offer is valid while I can response all mail sent . once overloaded I'll make FAQ's )

Designer graduated in Argentina having experience on cad, multimedia, design, and programming. Worked 24 years at O.R.T. Technical School and O.R.T. Institute of Technology teaching those subject at high school, college levels. He also was professor (universitary level), webmaster and Multimedia Lab Director at I.T.B.A (Buenos Aires Institute of Technology). By the time, Mario owns his design company (Artandata Group) in Sao Paulo Capital - Brazil.

## **Unleashing Your Creative Power**

**By Bill Daugherty**

### **Unleashing Your Creative Power by Bill Daugherty**

Have you ever read a great classified ad or seen a spectacular web site and wished you had the creative ability to produce work like that? Chances are you do have a lot more creative ability than you are currently making use of, it just needs to be unleashed. This then leads to the question, how can I unleash my creativity?

I have always had a difficult time getting the creative juices flowing. But over the past few years I have discovered a couple of techniques that work wonders for me. I didn't invent these techniques, they're not new, but they work.

The first technique is a two step process. I start with a word-association exercise. When I need to write a new ad or design a web page, I take a legal pad or use my word processing program and start by writing down a keyword that relates to the product or service I am working with. Then I write down whatever word that the key word brings to mind. I write down ANY word that pops into my head. I don't reject anything at this point, the object is to keep the process flowing.

After I have a page or two of words, I go to the second step. Now I eliminate the garbage words, words that I know won't work in my ad. I use the remaining "nuggets" to start a sentence-association exercise and continue until all my words are exhausted.

This technique may seem like a lot of work, and it is, but I have produced some great ads with it. Plus, most of the time an idea for the complete ad will pop into my head before I have spent too much time with the process. Sometimes the idea will come after only writing a few words in step one.

The second technique you may find easier. This is a free-association with other peoples ads or

web sites. Don't misunderstand, I am not looking at other people's work to steal their ideas, I use them to trigger ideas of my own.

Another way to use this process is to look at some your own past work. See if you can determine why a particular ad worked or didn't work. Sometimes this can lead to some amazing new ideas.

Remember, you have a great deal of pent up

creative ability. All you need is the right device to unleash it. Try the techniques I have given you and let me know how they worked. My email address is listed below.

Bill Daugherty is the editor and publisher of the marketing and advertising ezine "E-Power Marketing." You can subscribe free at: <http://www.freeadsgalore.com> To see Bill's latest project goto: <http://www.PowerSearchExpress.com> To contact Bill mailto: [bill@epower.zzn.com](mailto:bill@epower.zzn.com)



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