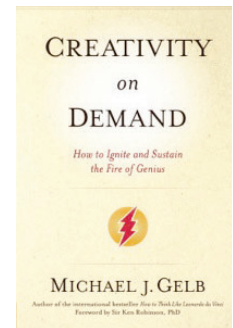


Creativity on Demand

How to Ignite and Sustain the Fire of Genius

A book excerpt by Mobius friend and innovation expert, Michael J. Gelb



What-if' questions are classic keys to unleashing creativity, so let's begin with a few:

- What if there is a source of creative energy that is inexhaustible, easily accessible, and free?
- What if the people we call geniuses, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Hildegard von Bingen, Nikola Tesla, and Marie Curie, had an intuitive understanding of how to connect with this source?
- What if for thousands of years people have been studying how to access, cultivate, store, and express creative energy?
- What if this wisdom, shrouded for millennia by esotericism and cultural prejudice, is now readily available?
- What if this book could teach you to apply that wisdom to raise your baseline of creative energy and insight?
- What if we combined this practical wisdom on accessing creative energy with an exploration of the most powerful methods for understanding and applying the creative process in your life now?

The answers are: There is. They did. They have been. It was and now it is. It will. And you will discover that you are more creative than you've ever imagined!

Creativity is my passion. I'm especially passionate about helping people develop and express their creativity. It's my profession, but it's also my life. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than helping someone realize his or her creative potential. Whether it's helping an aspiring author to write her first book, guiding a company to develop a more creative culture, or assisting a young friend in discovering his creative purpose, there's nothing that pleases me more. I do this by teaching tools for creative thinking and by a transmission of creative energy. That's what I want to do for you in this book.

Creativity: The Essential Twenty-First-Century Competency

In 1979 I co-directed my first five-day senior management retreat for the International Field Service Leadership Team of Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC). The theme was "utilizing creativity to deal with accelerating change." DEC's Field Service Leadership Team was ahead of the curve relative to the rest of the company. But their corporate leadership failed to anticipate the rise of the personal computer, and eventually Compaq acquired DEC.

Years later I gave a keynote speech at the global management conference for Compaq and reconnected with many of the participants from our original seminar. Then, a few years after that, I worked with Hewlett-Packard when it acquired Compaq. None of us knew, in that first seminar, just how fast change would accelerate.

COMMENTS ABOUT CREATIVITY ON DEMAND:

“A treasure chest of practices for bringing your inner spark out into the world – with heat, power, beauty, and grace.”

– Erica Ariel Fox,
author of the *New York Times* bestseller
Winning from Within

“Are you hoping to make creativity a daily practice, but feel that what you’re doing just isn’t working? In his latest book, Michael Gelb shows us how to tap into a creative energy that’s been recognized and cultivated for millennia. With examples drawn from a rich array of sources, both contemporary and ancient, this book might be the something different you’ve been looking for.”

– Daniel H. Pink,
author of *To Sell is Human* and *Drive*

Creativity on Demand is a highly original mixture of inspiration and executive coaching that will help you claim the creativity that is your birthright. Michael J. Gelb has generated an outstanding wellspring for creative thinking and practical problem-solving – you’ll find yourself reading it again and again to discover success and satisfaction in everything you do. And you’ll be thrilled with the results!

– Marshall Goldsmith,
a Thinkers 50 Top Ten Global Business Thinker
and top ranked executive coach

Since 1979 the zeitgeist has shifted toward the recognition that creativity is the most important “competency” for individuals and organizations. Evidence for this shift was offered in 2010 by IBM’s Institute for Business Value survey of fifteen hundred chief executives, which aimed to ascertain the qualities that CEOs value in their people. Although “execution” and “engagement” continue to be highly valued, the CEOs had a new number-one priority: creativity.

For years creativity was seen as primarily the province of research and development, and marketing and advertising. It is only recently that organizations have realized that creativity is the key to successful leadership in an increasingly complex world. The IBM report concludes, “CEOs are signaling a new direction. They are telling us that a world of increasing complexity will give rise to a new generation of leaders that make creativity the path forward for successful enterprises.” It adds, “Success requires fresh thinking and continuous innovation at all levels of the organization.”

Fresh thinking and continuous innovation are also necessary for anyone who wishes to lead a creative and fulfilling life. Fortunately, as you’ll discover, contemporary neuroscience has overturned the old fixed-mindset paradigm that led many of us to believe that creativity couldn’t be learned or developed. Now we know that we can continue improving our creative abilities throughout life.

Managing Energy: The Key to Creativity

Also in recent years, the best thinking on leadership and organizational performance has shifted away from the idea of managing time to recognize the importance of managing energy. One of the pioneers of this shift

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is James Clawson, the Johnson & Higgins Professor of Business Administration at the Darden Graduate School of Business at the University of Virginia. I asked him to reflect on his forty years of experience in business and offer his most important insight about leadership.

He responded, “Leadership is about managing energy, first in yourself and then in those around you.”

When I asked him to elaborate, he explained, “Most executives want to know how to motivate others, when often the problem lies closer to home. When you walk into an organization, you can tell quickly what the energy level is – and therefore the quality of leadership in the place. If the energy level is low, the leadership is likely to be weak. If the energy level is high, there is likely to be good leadership in place.” In his book *Powered by Feel: How Individuals, Teams, and Companies Excel*, Clawson and his collaborator, Doug Newburg, observe that worldwide managers believe that how one feels affects performance, yet virtually none of them think about or focus on managing feel and/or energy. Clawson adds, “Energy management is the key to generating engagement, esprit de corps, and creative leadership.”

Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, authors of the *New York Times* best-seller *The Power of Full Engagement*, came to similar conclusions. They explain, “Managing energy, not time, is the key to enduring high performance as well as to health, happiness, and life balance.” They emphasize:

- “Energy is the most important individual and organizational resource.”
- “Positive energy rituals – highly specific routines for managing energy – are the key to full engagement and sustained high performance.”

The sages of China came to these same conclusions five thousand years ago. Now we can apply this ancient wisdom to meeting the demand of our contemporary lives. In addition to learning and applying the creative mindset and methods of the creative process, the most important thing is to bring more *geist* to your *zeit*. ■



MICHAEL J. GELB is the world’s leading authority on the application of genius thinking to personal and organizational development. He is a pioneer in the fields of creative thinking, accelerated learning, and innovative leadership.

He is the author of 14 books on creativity and innovation including the international best seller *How to Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day*.

In 1999, Michael Gelb won the Brain Trust Charity’s “Brain of the Year” award; other honorees include Prof. Stephen Hawking, Bill Gates, Garry Kasparov and Gene Rodenberry. Michael Gelb is also a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique and the author of the classic work: *Body Learning: An Introduction to the Alexander Technique*.

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