



Ah, the THICK of the holidays. Are you getting creative and thoughtful about how you celebrate with your team? How are you thanking them for another year of hard work in the books? Don't let the hustle-bustle of the season make this opportunity slip by. I sure am thankful for your readership and continued love and support.

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UNLEASH YOUR TEAM'S CREATIVITY USING GROUND RULES

Teams are terrific for creating new ideas. A well-run creative session journeys into uncharted waters, so it's important to build a safe harbor for creative ideas to flourish. Unleash your team's creative juices with the following ground rules:

Everyone Is Creative. Don't accept the excuse, "I'm not creative." By getting up each day, everyone "creates" their day, so we are all creative in some fashion. You just haven't had the right opportunity to discover your hidden talent! (You might want to check out your working genius to find out!)

What's Said Here, Stays Here. In his book, *Rousing Creativity*, Floyd Hurt asserts that confidentiality counts. "If word spreads that ol' Joe said something dumb, not only will ol' Joe not come back, but neither will anyone else." For a free expression of ideas, nothing leaves the room unless everyone agrees.

Move! Movement inspires creativity. Stand up, move around, wave your arms, draw pictures, etc.

Be Spontaneous. Don't worry about what others will think of your idea. Don't think too long or too hard. Just let the creative energy of the group unlock your traditional thinking. Some of the best ideas have come from quiet team members who never considered themselves to be "creative." But when they allowed themselves to speak spontaneously, their contributions were huge!

Consider Every Idea. Respond to every idea with interest and curiosity, instead of criticism. Look for the positive aspects of the idea. If you need a jump start, try "this idea could work if...." Negative aspects simply become hurdles to overcome. Rather than saying "that won't fit," try asking "how can we make it bigger?"

Pitch In. When a team member can't fully express his or her idea, assist in developing the idea by asking questions and making suggestions.

Hitchhike On Others' Ideas. When someone says something that sparks a new idea, acknowledge the original idea. Then build on it. Everyone likes a little recognition and it builds the team's spirit as well.

Check Your Bearings. Especially in creative sessions, it's easy to wander off course. Be sure to check your bearings frequently (are you really trying to solve the problem?) to make sure you are still moving ahead on the topic.

Allow For "Soak Time." People often need time alone to create and consider new ideas. Set aside some time for the ideas to "soak" before any decision is made.

Be Patient. Creative sessions start out lively and chaotic. As the team begins to focus, capture key elements on a flipchart pad and refine using a team consensus process.

HOW TO PROMOTE YOURSELF DURING A PANEL DISCUSSION

Wondering how the heck you can subtly promote yourself during a panel discussion? You don't want to be too pushy or too salesy BUT there is a reason you said "yes" to the request. Perhaps you are looking for more visibility, awareness of a new product/service, or organization (whatever "it" is!).

Regardless of the reason you want to shamelessly promote yourself or your company, DON'T do it! There's a fine line between mentioning that your book was just released and hawking the darn thing – picking it up and lovingly petting it like your long-lost puppy. Mentioning that they can buy it at any online or local bookseller. Telling them they would be idiots if they didn't come up to talk to you about the book etc. There are other ways to get the point across without you having to shamelessly promote "it."

Enlist the Moderator. The panel moderator isn't stupid. She knows that there is an inherent reason you agreed to be on the panel – and it usually includes some kind of visibility or recognition. So talk to the moderator about how she can effectively and appropriately promote "it" during the panel discussion:

- The Introduction. As the moderator introduces you, they casually mention "it."
- Moderator-Curated Questions. The moderator asks you a question that references "it" or begs a response that you can weave into your answer. For example, the moderator can say, "In your latest book, you mentioned..." or "As an expert in..." or "How might we be able to..."
- Closing. At the end of the panel, the moderator can thank you and suggest the audience go to a website, email or meet with you for more information.

Other Panelists can reference "it" during the panel discussion as well. However, they can't do that if they don't know about "it." So during the coordination call(s), meet up OR a specific call to a panelist that you think is appropriately poised to mention "it," share your agenda and what you are specifically looking for. I love it when a panelist shares the glow with another panelist. "You mentioned that in your latest book...." It actually makes everyone look super-smart and connected!

Visuals. A less subtle way of promoting your stuff is a visible representation e.g. the use of your company logo on the backdrop or the product on the tabletop.

Prop. Bring a physical representation of "it" and give it to the moderator to display. (Beware of you picking it up and lovingly petting it like your long-lost puppy...

URL. People need a quick way to find you, so create a short URL and/or QR code that can be quickly shared with the audience.

Audience. The audience is not stupid. They know who you are and what company you work for. Provide great value and takeaways for the audience and then you and your

company may bask in the afterglow. If you rocked the house, people will come up to talk to you.

Don't Brag. Rhett Kniep of Centurion 7 Business Advisors wisely suggests that "You must remember the audience is not there to hear about your business acumen. Panelists are often tempted to share their success in a public forum, but self-promotion is poison in that kind of setting. Instead, focus on what you have learned and express it in terms of general advice, versus 'this is what I have done.' Share knowledge, not braggadocio." In essence, serve the audience and let others brag about "it!"

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: IT'S NOT ABOUT THE SHARK: HOW TO SOLVE UNSOLVABLE PROBLEMS

It's Not About the Shark: How to Solve Unsolvable Problems is not about a shark BUT it IS about problem-solving. The premise of the book is that when you focus too hard on fixing a problem, you'll be less likely to find an answer. A better idea is to broaden the solution set into the world of possibilities. Hence, the shark.

The opening anecdote hails from Steven Spielberg's problem of filming the movie "Jaws" while the primary character (the shark) was mechanically challenged. How can you film a movie when the main actor won't "act" appropriately? Throw more money at it? Build another shark? No! You film the movie without the shark! (Little known fact, the shark doesn't show up until 81 minutes into the movie.)

I agree with the premise (and have been teaching that in my critical thinking skills workshops for YEARS), and I enjoyed the anecdotes and research – however, many I have heard before, are a little stale (Jaws was made in 1975) and some are forced into supporting one of his main points.

That being said, I thoroughly enjoyed the book – particularly at the end of each chapter, he summarizes the key takeaways and two ways to overcome the theme of the chapter's challenge/bias.