

Creativity is an Employability Skill

The previous *Career Headlines* described five soft skills that LinkedIn employers look for in applicants: Creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and time management. You will power your career by developing these skills. "Creativity" is the topic for today.

When you think of creativity, what comes to mind?

Do you visualize an artist, a poet, an Internet game developer, or a songwriter? Does being creative at work pop up as one of the top forms of creativity? It is important to realize that creative thinking on the job is no longer an option. It's expected.

The most valued employees are creative problem solvers.

They look at things in new ways, without letting their own desires and biases interfere with what is best. Extremely important to this process is the ability to distinguish between good and poor ideas.

Know the difference between your own good and bad ideas.

Everyone has ideas, opinions, and suggestions, but not all are helpful. Your credibility depends on the ability to distinguish between your good and poor ideas, so always consider your input carefully before offering it. A good gauge for the value of your input is the reaction you receive from others. The following examples illustrate how to look creatively at a question, problem, or issue:



- Assume you're a web designer who has a great idea for a customer's website, but your customer wants something different. To be creative, look for a pattern in the customer's changes. Is the customer wanting simplicity, more or less color, the addition or deletion of images? A creative designer will think about all the customer's questions and suggestions and create a site that meets the customer's needs, while also being visually and electronically appealing.
- Let's say your job requires you to develop spreadsheets. Take a look at your spreadsheet design from the viewpoint of other users. Does it show complete information? Too much or too little information? Are the columns organized for easy understanding? Are the headings self-explanatory?
- Perhaps you are a nurse at a seniors' rehabilitation center and one of your patients clicks her call light continuously. Yet the complaints are minor when you check on her. She says her room is too cold or too hot. She didn't like her lunch and wants juice, or she complains about noise in the hall. A creative thinker would consider whether the patient is bored. Is she in pain? Is she afraid? What can you do to engage her?

Action: *"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten."* This old saying still makes a lot of sense today. Identify something you'd like to change in your job, a volunteer activity, or your life. Look at the issue in a new way and create a different approach to the situation.

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Note to instructors: In one of the Career Solutions Publishing talks to educators at a state conference this summer, we opened with the comment that "Expectations for young employees are increasing at an accelerated rate, primarily as a result of the competitive, global, technological economy." The ability to be a creative, yet practical, problem solver in this environment is essential to career growth.

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