Overview

As a creative professional for over 20 years, I've experienced my fair share of periods of creative block. There are many tips and tricks that I've used to jump start my creative process, and are even be fun to do when I'm not feeling stuck.

My primary audience is creative professionals that are feeling stuck on a project. They could be working on a very wide range of projects: writing, painting, designing a logo, or building a website. They have access to a computer with high speed internet, are familiar with various artistic methods, and are looking for ideas on how to break their creative blocks cheaply and quickly. They are visual thinkers, are likely under deadline on their project, and need some suggestions on how to stimulate their thinking.

The methods that are suggested, in a Pecha Kucha style presentation, can be applied to a great variety of topics. Pecha Kucha is a presentation style that only has two rules: 1) 20 slides, 2) each slide is on the screen for 20 seconds. I feel that the Pecha Kucha approach fits nicely for this topic, since it doesn't take long to watch at 6 minutes and 40 seconds.

I built the presentation in Adobe Captivate 9. I've recently learned to use Captivate for a different course, and by using it for this project I have increased my level of understanding of the program. I would encourage my fellow students to apply the same application for this project. A Pecha Kucha presentation is much less difficult to create than an online course, and so it came together relatively easily, and it creates another portfolio piece for my website. I shot my own photography for the images. I enjoy photography, and by taking images specifically for this presentation, I was able to have unique art that spoke to each point. I narrated the audio myself. I don't really like the sound of my own voice, but am attempting to get comfortable with hearing my own voice as audio in a course. Not only are we (as eLearning developers and instructional designers) often limited by our budgets (and so cannot afford a narrator), it also helps to create empathy with vocal talent when you have suffered through creating and editing your own audio. The presentation, and this design document are on my portfolio site: www.christinamooredesign.com/2017/10/31/breaking-creative-walls/.

Learning Objectives

- The learner will be able to choose an exercise to stimulate their creativity, to use on their own project.

Design Decisions

Design Decision 1:

In order to make my presentation as powerful visually as possible, I chose to use one large image per screen, I kept each slide to one idea, and to made the text very minimal. Reynolds (2012) suggests, "simplicity…comes from an intelligent desire for clarity that gets to the essence of an issue" (p. 115). Keeping complex ideas simple in presentations helps the audience to grasp the meaning behind the words. It is not an easy thing to create; to make a simple layout. There are a lot of things to revise in order to get down to the core of the matter. Duarte (2010) points out, "Each slide should have only one message… Sketch out small visual representations of your ideas on paper or sticky notes. Constraining your ideas to a small sketch space guides you to simple, clear words and pictures" (p. 140). It was quite a while before I allowed myself to start building my presentation in Captivate. I began with sketches, and then moved onto photography.

Design Decision 2:

By sharing my own personal struggles, and empathizing with the audience about how frustrating it is to be stuck on a creative project, I not only built a narrative with my audience, but also told a story. Duarte (2010) emphasizes, "So if a report primarily conveys information, then stories produce an experience. Blending the two creates a perfect world for your presentation where facts and stories can be layered like a cake." (p. 27). I wanted not only to address a pain point with the audience, but also to entertain them with the story. Heath & Heath (2008) argue, "…there's no such thing as a passive audience. When we hear a story, our minds move from room to room. When we hear a story, we simulate it" (p. 210). By sharing my story, and using emotion, I hoped to draw in the audience in the creative journey.

Design Decision 3:

I recorded my own voice to narrate each screen. I had considered only having the music, photo and headline, but felt that the "meat" of the presentation was in the details of how to use each exercise. Recording my own audio also allowed me to express emotion in my voice. Reynolds (2012) explains, "Our brains tend to recall experiences or stories that have a strong emotional element to them. The emotional components of stories are what helps them be remembered" (p. 87). With such a short presentation, and a lot of creativity approaches described, I wanted the audience to remember as many methods as possible. Duarte (2010) asserts, "Stories are the most powerful delivery tool for information, more powerful and enduring than any other art form" (p. 16). Having included the audio description, rather than keeping just images and words, I have strengthened the power of my presentation.

Design Decision 4:

I shot original photography, specifically for each slide. I had considered using some of my older photography, but most of it wasn't specific enough to each point I was making. By shooting per slide, the images are exactly what I'm trying to illustrate in the presentation, and not generic in nature. Duarte (2010) says "A picture really is worth a thousand words – and a thousand emotions. A compelling image can become an unforgettable emotional link to your information" (p. 148). By creating each image for each slide, I am deepening the connection between my

audio, and the point of the presentation, so that the audience finds it memorable. Reynolds (2012) speaks of an interesting brain function in learning, "A mirror neuron in the brain fires both when you do something and when you see someone else doing the same thing, even though you have not moved. It's almost as if you, the observer, are actually engaging in the same behavior as the person who is engaged in the action" (p. 254). While this is a video is not a live demonstration, many of my slides are examples of the exercises that I'm proposing the learner use. For example, the brainstorming photo is of what came out of my brainstorm on the subject of creativity.

Design Decision 5:

For the overarching theme of the video, I chose the topic of creativity. To be "creative" can be a wonderfully effortless expression, as well as a maddeningly elusive one. I feel that every person is inherently creative. Whether it is expressed via writing, math, problem solving, or photography; in my opinion, to be creative is simply to approach something in a non-traditional manner. Duarte (2010) clarifies, "Being human and taking risks are the foundation of creative results. Taking risks shows you're willing to tap into something your gut is telling you will work, without letting your head talk you out of it. That's creativity and humanness at its best" (p. 12). Sometimes we can get stuck into creative ruts, and continually try to solve problems with approaches that have worked for us in the past. I don't feel that creativity, in itself, is celebrated enough in our culture; and those that identify with being a "creative" are often glossed over, and unappreciated. To quote Sir Ken Robinson, "Creativity is as important as literacy."

Script

Slide Number: 1 of 20	Slide Name: Feeling stuck	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Are you feeling a bit stuck? Like you're up against a creative wall? It can be really tough to be "on" creatively all the time. If you feel like you could use some new exercises and tools to recharge your creative batteries, then this video was created with you in mind.		
Image name: bear.jpg		

Slide Number: 2 of 20	Slide Name: Handy tips	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Overcoming creative blocks is a normal part of life for a creative professional. We've all been there and I totally sympathize with your struggle. I've poured over a ton of materials on creativity over the years. I would like to share with you my favorite "handy" tips.		
Image name: handsculpture.jpg		

Slide Number: 3 of 20	Slide Name: Step back	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: There is a theme to my suggestions: take a step back. I've been a creative professional for years, and have encountered my fair share of creative blocks. So just take a step back from your projects, give yourself a break, and reframe the obstacle. Sometimes you're just too close to your problem.		
Image name: stepback.jpg		

Slide Number: 4 of 20	Slide Name: Cheap art supplies	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: One of my favorite activities, that I learned from the book "The Artist's Way," is to take $5 and go to the dollar store. Buy whatever materials call out to you; just keep it within		

the $5 budget. Act like a kid again. Are stickers calling your name? How about some brand new crayons?	
Image name: dollarstore2.jpg	

Slide Number: 5 of 20	Slide Name: Artists Date	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Another great tip from "The Artist's Way" is to take yourself on an "Artist's Date." No one else is invited to join you. The location is your choice, but one of my favorites is the bookstore. You don't need to spend a dime. Just hang out in your favorite section and check out work that you admire.		
Image name: bookstore.jpg		

Slide Number: 6 of 20	Slide Name: Get up and move	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: I'm not sure about you, but I often forget to step away from the computer. Get up and move. Take a second to do a mental check in. Is your back tight? Are your eyes feeling strained? Give yourself a timeout and go for a walk. If the weather is not cooperating, stand up and do some stretches.		
Image name: hikingshoes.jpg		

Slide Number: 7 of 20	Slide Name: Put on some music	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Almost everyone loves music. William Congreve said it best, "Musick has charms to sooth a savage breast." Put in your earbuds, or blast your favorite playlist. No matter the style of music that speaks to you, immerse yourself in your favorite songs.		
Image name: dancer1.jpg		

Slide Number: 8 of 20	Slide Name: Make it easier	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: What if you had a million bucks? What if time were no object? What if there were no client? Shoot for the moon! Think about your project without constraints. That little voice in your head that's trying to rain on your parade? Mute that annoying voice for now, and dream big!		
Image name: lottery.jpg		

Slide Number: 9 of 20	Slide Name: Make it harder	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Try the opposite; add constraints to your project. What if it was due tonight? What if you could only pick two colors? What if your budget was extremely small, or nonexistent? Sometimes when you frame your project in very specific parameters, you can come up with the most creative solution.		
Image name: character.jpg		

Slide Number: 10 of 20	Slide Name: Try a new medium	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Try a new medium that you're not familiar with. Are you a photographer? Pick up a paintbrush. A graphic designer? Try to write a song. Take your current project, and apply a new approach to it. By stepping outside of your comfort zone, you'll be adding a whole new layer of depth to your approach.		
Image name: paintingtextureorange.jpg		

Slide Number: 11 of 20	Slide Name: Treat yourself	Duration: 20 sec

Narration: We often neglect ourselves. Work, family, bills, deadlines. Our own emotional health can take a backseat to our busy lives. When is the last time you did something indulgent; just for you? Treat yourself to something nice, and your creativity might just treat you back with the "ah ha" moment you've been searching for.
Image name: shinyhearthand.jpg

Slide Number: 12 of 20	Slide Name: Change your perspective	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Sometimes we're just too focused on a specific angle. Try changing your perspective. What does it look like from above? From below? From very far away? What does it look like extremely close up? How would a child see it? What would an elderly person see? Reassess your project from a different angle.		
Image name: trees.jpg		

Slide Number: 13 of 20	Slide Name: Brainstorm	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Take out a blank piece of paper. Write your subject in the center. Next write down everything that comes to mind on that subject. Don't edit your ideas. What does it feel like? Smell like? If it were a thing, what would it be? What are its synonyms? Its antonyms?		
Image name: creativebrainstorm.jpg		

Slide Number: 14 of 20	Slide Name: Pretend you are different	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Are you naturally extroverted? Pretend to be shy. Take on a different personality for a day, or even just an hour. What does your project look like when you're someone else? What if you were famous? Or reclusive? Walk in another person's shoes for a bit, and see the project from their eyes.		
Image name: bedifferent.jpg		

Slide Number: 15 of 20	Slide Name: Have a laugh	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: They say that laughter is the best medicine, and for good reason! When you smile, or laugh, your body releases endorphins, which promote a sense of wellbeing. If you're feeling your best, you're likely to be more creative and open to new ideas. Here you can see some of the things near my desk, that make me chuckle.		
Image name: humor.jpg		

Slide Number: 16 of 20	Slide Name: Creative journal	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Start a creative journal. It can be a physical journal, where you tape in things that you love. Collect photos, textures, and color schemes. Or it can be a google doc with links to articles and websites. Whichever method you choose, you'll be making a treasure chest full of creative ideas.		
Image name: journal.jpg		

Slide Number: 17 of 20	Slide Name: Meditate	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Meditation is free, easy, and always accessible. It can take as little as 10 minutes of your time, and can be done anywhere. By taking a little time for yourself, and just noticing what's going on in your own thoughts, you can often unlock the answers you've been searching for.		
Image name: cairne.jpg		

Slide Number: 18 of 20	Slide Name: Embrace mistakes	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Paul Arden said, "The person who doesn't make mistakes is unlikely to make anything. Failures and false starts are a precondition of success." So go ahead and break a few eggs. How else are you going to make an omelet?		
Image name: breakeggs.jpg		

Slide Number: 19 of 20	Slide Name: vision board	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: Make a vision board about your project. Think of your project as you look through old magazines. Cut out everything you find that relates, and paste it to a sheet of paper, or pin it to a bulletin board. By assembling graphics in one place, you will get a pretty clear idea of what you're going for.		
Image name: visionboard.jpg		

Slide Number: 20 of 20	Slide Name: Next time	Duration: 20 sec
Narration: So the next time that creative wall rears its ugly head, you've got an arsenal of creative approaches to break through it. Whether it's a trip to the dollar store, getting a little exercise or meditation, or adjusting the constraints of your project, you've got some new tools to choose from.		
Image name: brickwall.jpg		

Formative Evaluation Response

Peer Review Question 1: How might I improve the narration? As most people, I hate the sound of my own voice. I feel as though it's important to improve on narrating though.

I asked the question to hopefully gain some suggestions on how to improve narration. I'm hoping that my peers have experience with narration, and are comfortable doing so.

> **Peer Reviewer A:** I think your voice sounds great! I think it is hard to evaluate the sound of our own voice and this is probably a question most of us ask ourselves when it comes to creating projects like this one. I know I did! I recorded my own voice about seven times when making my presentation. Your voice sounds fine, the pacing of the narration is good with the photos. One minor thing I noticed was the transition from slide one to two, there was a little pop sound. It could probably be fixed by editing that out.

> **Peer Reviewer B:** I agree with Peer Reviewer A's assessment that many of us don't particularly like to hear our own voices. I'm with you on that – and I'll reiterate her comment that you sound great! There are some slides that don't sound quite as fluid as others – for example, "have a laugh" sounds sort of like you're reading it, instead of telling a story. "Try a new medium," on the other hand, sounds really natural, like you're just talking to me. I also noticed that when you get to "put on some music," the tone of your voice changes. I don't know if I would have noticed it if I weren't listening specifically for your narration, but I did notice there's a shift there. That said, doing a narration and getting it all just right is hard – so these tiny things I noticed aren't deal-breakers in any way.

> **Considerations:** I decided to re-record each slide. When I listened to it, I cringed each time. I felt as though my pace and tone were robotic and somewhat preachy. I feel that my normal personality is showing in the audio now. I also made sure that there was at

least a full second at the beginning and end of each slide, to allow for transition, so that it didn't sound abrupt. I chose to type up the script, whereas I was reading from my handwriting before. I also stood while speaking, and didn't worry about slowing my pace down for clarity. I think one of the things that I was struggling with was due to my attempts to enunciate. I've provided captions for those that are hearing impaired.

Peer Review Question 2: 1. I removed the background music, as I was struggling with the quality, especially between slides. Besides freemusicarchive.org, are you aware of any high quality background music resources? What has been your experience with adding background music in YouTube?

I asked the questions because I really struggled in Captivate getting both the narration and the background music volumes to complement each other.

> **Peer Reviewer A:** I haven't added music in YouTube but I have added music in iMovie and Garage band. I have also used freemusicarchive.org and it seemed fairly easy to me. Although, I only used it once as I discovered that Garage band comes with a library of free music clips that can be used. I don't know that your presentation needs music. There is something calm and still about your images that I really like. Perhaps you can add an intro or outro or both but I don't think it's necessary.

> **Peer Reviewer B:** I'm not of much help – well, not of any help – with the music source question, because I haven't done any work with music at all. As for whether you need music, as a person who is rarely without music, I vote no. I think music would add a layer that would take away from your message. Your narration content is really strong and your images are great; together they made me think, and it was peaceful. My opinion is that music could potentially be a distraction.

> **Considerations:** I decided not to reintroduce background music. I noticed on some presentations recently that between text, images on the screen, narration, and possible video movement, it became almost impossible for me to grasp everything that was going on. I like that my peer reviewers felt that there was a calmness in my presentation. I strove for simplicity, while remaining rich visually.

Peer Review Question 3: 1. If you were going to remove one or two slides from the middle (ie., the suggestions for creative exercises) which ones would you delete, and why?

I asked because I was testing the perceived value of the interior slides. I was debating on whether or not to extend the summary, and therefore delete one or two of the exercises.

> **Peer Reviewer A:** I thought the images you chose for the creative exercises were ideal for the point you were trying to make. If I had to choose one it would be the image for the "Have a laugh" slide. Only because I think it was funny, instead I stared at it thinking, what is that? Which is sort of funny! Of course, as you say in your narration humor is very subjective so it could just be me. The image that comes to mind is just people laughing, laughter is so contagious, usually a person only has to hear someone laughing or remember laughing and then they laugh.

> **Peer Reviewer B:** IF I were going to remove a slide or two…the one that didn't resonate with me as much as the others is the "have a laugh" slide. The image didn't convey creativity to me – I had to really look to understand what it was, and by then I'd sort of missed what you were saying. The other one that I sort of stumbled over was "treat yourself." While I am a FAN of treating yourself, it did make me pause to wonder how

treating myself would help me be more creative. The other activities had a straighter line connecting them to creativity. Again, while these didn't resonate as strongly with me, I don't know that I'd remove these slides; in the end, we all respond differently and these might be just what someone needs to spark creativity!

Considerations: I reshot the "have a laugh" slide to include several things from around my desk that make me laugh. I rewrote the slide narration to address why laughter can stimulate creative thinking. I revised the "treat yourself" slide text to address why taking care of yourself can help with creativity. I had considered removing one of those exercises, but updated them instead.

Peer Review Question 4: 1. How might I improve the summary page? I think it might be too different than the preceding pages.

I asked because the summary page is set up as a bulleted summary of the creative exercises. It has a lot more information on the screen, as well as the credits for the video. I felt like I needed a summary and a credits page.

Peer Reviewer A: When the summary pops up it does stand out as being very different, a white page against a brick wall. I wonder if you could incorporate the brick wall somehow? Maybe the text could appear white against the red bricks. Or, visually convey the image of "breaking" the brick wall down. Another idea could be to create a slide where the brick wall is faded in the background so the text box doesn't stand out as much.

Peer Reviewer B: The summary page is definitely different, and the text is a bit small. I wonder what would happen if you used individual text boxes with a contrasting font color and just "painted" the text onto the brick? My other thought is to use the same banners that you use throughout the presentation, though animation of those could get messy. What would happen if you shorten your phrases – for example, music or be different or brainstorm? Would this allow for a bit more flexibility in how you present the text?

Considerations: I rewrote the slide narration for the summary page, to be a verbal summary rather than bullet points. I removed the credits, except for my own website, as it wasn't necessary. I had already credited the books and/or writer verbally and in the captions. Additionally, this design doc will be available to download from my site.

Peer Review Question 5: 1. How did you feel about the images? I shot them all originally for this specific project. Do you feel as though they helped strengthen the material? Why or why not?

I asked because I shot all the images for this assignment. As a long-time creative professional, I feel as though these images will resonate with my audience. I was curious if they might be perceived differently by instructional designers, who might not be used to creative expression. While instructional designers are not my target audience, they are my peer reviewers.

Peer Reviewer A: I loved your images, there are few that really stood out to me. The first one that comes to mind is the "Vision Board" slide. That resonated with me, I love making collages and vision boards. A few more that I thought were great choices were the fall leaves, the art supplies, and the large hand. The image of the artist's model figure was a good choice but I think he stands against a different background. He is the same color as the background, perhaps he could stand against a bright blue/red/yellow

wall. Something to make him stand out. Other than that, I enjoyed the images and love that you took your own photos.

Peer Reviewer B: I really like your images. You selected an image for each slide that makes sense (except for the laughter one that I had to work on); they aren't too busy, which allowed me to look at the images, think about what they mean, and listen to your narration. The only image I might change is one that advocates "pretend you are different." I'm thinking the blending between the figure and the background was meant to communicate "these are the same – don't be like this, be different." I wonder if it would send a stronger message if the background was very different, showing the figure as really standing out?

Considerations: I reshot the artist model on a sky background, and reshot the laughter slide with a bunch of different things that make me laugh from around my desk. I also changed the verbiage in the laughter slide to note that the audience is looking at a few of the things that I keep at my desk to make me laugh.

Lessons Learned

I think the most important lesson I learned on this project, was to push myself, even when overwhelmed. This term has been the most difficult for me so far. I have not had much of a personal life for months now, but I didn't let that stop me from trying to make something original and valuable. I could have taken the easier route and made a PowerPoint presentation, but instead I chose to just go for it. I furthered my learning by using Captivate to create the presentation (which I am just learning), I photographed 100% of the images for this project (rather than using any of my previously shot images), and I chose to narrate the presentation in my own voice (rather than relying on automated narration, or background music).

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