



The Myths of Creativity: The Truth about How Innovative Companies and People Generate Great Ideas

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How to get past the most common myths about creativity to design truly innovative strategies We tend to think of creativity in terms reminiscent of the ancient muses: divinely-inspired, unpredictable, and bestowed upon a lucky few. But when our jobs challenge us to be creative on demand, we must develop novel, useful ideas that will keep our organizations competitive. *The Myths of Creativity* demystifies the processes that drive innovation. Based on the latest research into how creative individuals and firms succeed, David Burkus highlights the mistaken ideas that hold us back and shows us how anyone can embrace a practical approach, grounded in reality, to finding the best new ideas, projects, processes, and programs.

Answers questions such as: What causes us to be creative in one moment and void in the next? What makes someone more or less creative than his or her peers? Where do our flashes of creative insight come from, and how can we generate more of them?

Debunks 10 common myths, including: the Eureka Myth; the Lone Creator Myth; the Incentive Myth; and The Brainstorming Myth

Written by David Burkus, founder of popular leadership blog LDRLB

For anyone who struggles with creativity, or who makes excuses for delaying the work of innovation, *The Myths of Creativity* will help you overcome your obstacles to finding new ideas.

The Myths of Creativity: The Truth about How Innovative Companies and People Generate Great Ideas Details

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Kathy says

I didn't think this book would be interesting but I was wrong. I quite enjoyed it. The stories within the myths were what kept my interest - many of which I have heard before but there was usually a new fact pointed out regarding the story that made them seem fresh. Some of the myths I wouldn't call myths for instance the "cohesive myth"; I have always believed that conflict increases creativity and the end result is a better decision. Overall I cannot say that I disagree with any of the myths identified and it made me think about my own biases regarding creativity.

Melinda says

What a fabulous book.

This is the best non-fiction book I've ever read. Beautifully written with a level of detail in the research that makes each myth deconstruction completely captivating.

Firmly rooted in the real world, this book blows apart the myths and faulty data behind those pithy, condescending platitudes (often disguised as motivational quotes / infographics) people use as rationale for their unrealistic expectations of themselves and (most often) others to produce creative thinking and innovation on demand in environments and situations that stifle it instead of facilitate it.

David Burkus replaces these fairytales with the truth and provides fact-based, real-word examples of how to set up frameworks anyone can implement and use to create an environment that yields creative thought and innovation.

Contrary to what one may expect from a book that takes down these well-loved and shared tall-stories, this book left me feeling as if anything is possible for me and anybody else who has the desire and drive to create and innovate.

From now on, when I need a dose of inspiration, I'm going to turn to this book. You can keep your fantasy world.

Ken says

This review was for the 12booksgroup. Great descriptions of prevalent myths of creativity, with excellent stories and summaries of work like Amabile's. Absent from the example stories, as even the author noted, were international examples; specifically, stories outside of the U.S.

Another small criticism I had was the absence of a summary chapter. Burkus explained this, in a 12books Q&A session, as purposeful - hoping that the reader would be left with a slight feeling of discomfort at the open-ended structure. Perhaps this feeling is similar to the "Mousetrap Myth," a chapter in Burkus' book, that we tend to lean toward the practical and familiar over new ideas and formats. With that said, I admit that I definitely leaned toward the familiar, hoping for that summary of ideas at the end.

Matthew Ting says

I think like 75% of the book is pretty good. Provides a good framework for creativity. I think the concept of incubation (stepping back, being idle, giving unconscious mind time to process) is important and one I want to remember. It's a pretty well written book and an easy read. A lot of interesting stories.

The other 25% is a bit too forcefully strewn together with anecdotes or felt a little cherry picked. It doesn't seem fair to pick a few examples and present them as a mythbuster. E.g. to debunk the "expert" myth, it mentioned InnoCentive and Fuse Corps as how external domain expertise is important to find solutions. I think those organizations are more lessons in crowdsourcing and staffing models than people successfully applying unrelated skill-sets... E.g. it presents quirky corporate structures like Gore and Pixar in a superior light, though I'm sure there are a ton of counter-examples that achieve similar results.

Also felt a little straw man, conjecturing that all of these are widely accepted myths. I still like it though

Victoria says

If you have ever wondered if you are creative or somebody else is. Or "if you only had more time" .Dispels the "excuses" or "rationalizations" we make when it comes to creativity.

Please see mini-summary here:
<http://victoriascolumn.blogspot.com/2...>

Brent says

I read this as part of the fantastic <http://www.12booksgroup.com/> discussion of the book. The author provided us with a great live Q&A at the end of September. Great way to finish.

As stated by others, this book is not a 1 through 10 checklist for being creative. I was thankful for that. I enjoyed how the author explained each myth, gave research to show how the myth is false, then gave real life success examples that ran counter to the myth. Using this approach, along with the author's excellent writing style, made the book a fun read. My kids kept asking me why I was using my free time to read a "work" book!

Are the myths covered by the author really destroyed? That I'm not so sure about. What the book does achieve is it force one to reconsider his own biases and assumptions about creativity. That in itself is

valuable. But some of the arguments found in some chapters seem to support myths from other chapters.

The myth I had the most trouble accepting as myth is the "Breed" myth, the idea that creative people are born that way. You either have it or you don't. Although studies are given to support that "Nature couldn't explain away nurture", later parts of the book discuss differences in brain structure in regards to the amount of "white matter" each of us possess. The more "white matter", the more inclined to be creative. During the author lead discussion, Mr Burkus addressed this question. In essence, there may be a range of innate creativity but his point is that we can still learn to be creative. Fair enough. A bit of truth to the "Breed" myth, while reminding us that everyone has creative potential.

Casey Wheeler says

I was given this book by David Burkus to review as part of the 12 Books Group with the expectation that I would participate in the discussion on Goodreads and post a review to Goodreads, my blog, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google + and Amazon.

I found the book to be an entertaining, well researched, fast read that clearly presented the ideas and concepts the author is trying to impart. While I had read about many of the examples that he used in the book, I really liked that he went into greater detail about what happened with each example. It was not a once over easily gloss over approach.

The book contains eleven chapters and each delves into its subject in an informative matter. Over the course of my career I have had the pleasure (or pain) of seeing the end result of believing in most of the myths presented. I really enjoyed the chapters on The Originality Myth, the Lone Creator Myth and the Cohesive Myth.

As an added plus, if you visit the author's website and sign-up for his newsletter, you will receive a free copy of the workbook that goes with the book. I am looking forward to utilizing it.

I heartily recommend this book for anyone who is interested in creativity whether for yourself or within your organization.

Louis Prosperi says

An insightful book that challenges much of our "common sense" about creativity.

At the title suggests, this book explores several "myths" about creativity, most of which will be quite familiar to many readers. Together these form a "mythology of creativity", a set of beliefs we carry around about how creativity works. For each of the ten "myths" explored in this book, the author introduces the "myth" (what it is and the thinking behind it), and then proceeds to cite both social science research and business case studies which dispel the "myth" and illustrate how the creative process really works. The "myths" explored in this book include:

* The Eureka Myth (ideas come to us as flashes of insight)

- * The Breed Myth (creative ability is a trait inherent in one's personality or genes)
- * The Originality Myth (creative ideas are totally original to their creators)
- * The Expert Myth (harder problems call for more knowledgeable experts)
- * The Incentive Myth (incentives can increase the motivation of people)
- * The Lone Creator Myth (breakthroughs and creative insights are attributed to a sole person)
- * The Brainstorming Myth (brainstorming alone will yield creative ideas)
- * The Cohesive Myth (everyone must get along and work happily together)
- * The Constraints Myth (constraints hinder our creativity)
- * The Mousetrap Myth (the world will recognize merit of an idea and help bring it to life)

As someone very interested in creativity and understanding the creative process, this book was on my "can't wait to read it" list for quite a while, and it met and exceeded all my expectations.

As I mentioned earlier, I think the "myths" in this book will be largely familiar to many readers. The author's choice of the word "myth" is quite appropriate, as the concepts explored in this book have deep, deep roots in our thinking about creativity, and as such, many readers are quite likely to recognize most of if not all of them as ideas they either believe to be true, or at least acknowledge as "common sense".

At the same time, I also think that the truth around these "myths" will also ring familiar to many, as many of the ideas and stories the authors shares to debunk the "myths" are fairly well-known (the origins of the Post-It Note, for example).

Does that mean that I think the book has nothing new to offer its readers? Not at all!

One of the things that this book does really well is to shine a light on these "myths", exposing the truth about some of our longest-held beliefs about creativity. This (hopefully) forces the reader to rethink their own beliefs about creativity and the creative process. I think this is especially important, because the "myths" exposed in this book represent unquestioned and often unspoken assumptions about how the creative process works. The real insidiousness of these "myths" is that because they are so often assumed to be true, they quietly and subtly inform our creative process without us even noticing. When the need for a creative solution arises, the beliefs that underlie the "myths" discussed in this book often take over our thinking and lead us to approaches that ultimately limit and hinder our creativity.

If I have one minor quibble about this book, it's that it doesn't contain a summary chapter, and as a result, it ends somewhat abruptly. I would have also liked to see some practical advice around how to address the predominance of these "myths". For example, a "Myths of Creativity" checklist with questions focused on how to identify practices based on each "myth" would add more value to an already great book.

Just to be clear, I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in creativity or in how we can be more creative in the workplace, our schools, and in our lives.

[Disclaimer: I received a complimentary electronic copy of this book for being part of the book's "Launch Team".]

Jacob says

I just got off of a live Q&A call with David Burkus talking about his book, "The Myths of Creativity." The call was very inspiring and David is a very sincere and great person. I've been reading his book throughout this month and finished it earlier this week. "The Myths of Creativity" addresses the various things that we believe to be true about creative ideas and creative people that are in fact myths. In addressing the myths David also references the science and then explains the truth as it relates to each of these questions.

One of my favorite chapters was the Eureka Myth. This chapter helps explain the core processes that we go through when developing ideas. Of particular note is the incubation phase in which we are not directly focused the project or problem. It is because of this process that we feel like our best ideas come to us in the shower or when we aren't thinking about it directly.

I also really appreciated the originality myth. We tend to believe that when we have a good idea we alone are responsible for it and that the idea is new and unique. In this chapter we learn that all ideas are built upon other ideas. They are the natural evolution or combination of existing thoughts and ideas.

The third chapter I will mention here is the expert myth. We tend to believe that the more expert someone is in any given area the more likely they are to be able to generate unique ideas in that field. This is far from the truth. The science suggests that while we need a basic understanding of the field, an expert is generally too bias to the existing ideas and science to truly think outside of the box.

Each chapter of this book discusses a myth, the science behind that myth, and the reality of how creativity really works. While this book plays well toward professionals who work in a "creative" environment I think anyone could benefit and enjoy reading this book.

Dawn Lennon says

The enigma of what it means to be creative has led individuals and companies to adopt mindsets about "who is" and "who isn't" creative. From there the questioning sequence goes to: "What do we need to do as a company to be innovative." The answer: "Get more creative."

It's then that the myths of creativity take over. David Burkus does a fine job identifying, defining, illustrating, debunking the myths of creativity and how they affect us and organizations. It's clearly written, neatly organized, and motivating.

I was invited by the books publicist to write a blog post about it which was released yesterday, the book's launch date. If you're interested, here's the link: [http://www.dawnlennon.com/2013/10/14/...](http://www.dawnlennon.com/2013/10/14/)

Susan Beamon says

I read this book for the 12 Books group at Goodreads, which is business reading and discuss group. This is definitely a discussion book, not a how to book, like many business books are. I found it very interesting, a combination of history and research in creative thinking. It reminded me of some things that I had learned before, and told me more stories about our human past. Creativity is not what we believe it is. It is not a singular achievement, but a group activity that takes a great deal of work. The things that we believe about the creative process get in the way of success.

Ana-Maria Bujor says

This is quite an interesting and easy read and it also clears up some myths about creativity, one of the biggest buzzwords of our time. There are a lot of people who say they are not creative, or that the guy with a flowery shirt and neon blue glasses has to be creative. And also there are a lot of bosses who insist on wasting people's time with useless brainstorming sessions. This book shows why it's all one big myth and gives solutions for creating more and in better ways. This is definitely one of the "business" books I recommend

cizi says

Super enjoyed this book. It is broken down into 11 myths and footnoted extensively. Highly recommend to those interested in learning about creativity (ie not just applied to the arts).

Jay says

Another in the "everything you know is wrong" mold of pop business/psychology books. This one had good and not so good points. I enjoyed the writing. I initially enjoyed the concept of debunking commonly held beliefs about creativity. And many of the examples of "creativity" were more recent in comparison to the many other books treading related water published recently.

I find these kinds of pop science/business books have a typical flow per chapter - describe what people commonly think, identify how it is wrong, provide 2 or 3 research examples proving the point, and provide one or two examples in practice. These work well when reading for entertainment. And that was how I approached this initially. Until Chapter 7, which is devoted to saying that creativity is not an individual pursuit but is more likely in teams. But the research and examples didn't fit well. Both research examples given really show that teams can have different levels of creativity. They don't compare teams to an individual in creativity, which is what this "myth" was about. The examples included Broadway plays and the differences in the teams that make them up compared to how successful they are. This got me to think about another example of creative work, the fiction novel. I don't recall having read a fiction novel written by a team, so I think that example debunks the debunking. This is when it became clear that the "myths" described were just ways of looking at things, and while they can be correct in situations, they can also be incorrect in situations. The author just focused on the later case. I also think some of the research and examples that were used to debunk one "myth" could have been used to support others but weren't.

The test of this kind of book for business is if it leaves you with something actionable or makes you think of new ways to operate your business given the author's context. These criteria really combine here. I didn't get all that much new to think of given that the "myths" that were debunked seemed situational and I never took a myth as being a rule anyway. But the author does leave good reminders of some specific creativity techniques and their proper usage. I especially found the brainstorming discussion helpful, and yes, I've been doing it wrong.

Michael Stallard says

David Burkus' new book, "The Myths of Creativity: The Truth About How Innovative Companies and People Generate Great Ideas," is among the best business books I've read this year. It provides a valuable review of research and practices related to the process of innovation. It's impossible to read "The Myths of Creativity" and not come away with new, useful practices that will improve your ability to innovate. I highly recommend it.

Readers of this book will gain a newfound appreciation for just how difficult innovation is. Fortunately, Burkus equips readers with practices to help individuals and organizations overcome the biases and potential pitfalls that frequently derail innovation. For example, Burkus shows how conflict is a necessary part of the process and represents a risk to innovation if it gets personal. He then goes on to provide a solution by describing the practice Pixar developed that employs conflict in a constructive way while keeping it from escalating into internal combat.

I liked the way Burkus organized the book into ten myths about creativity including the Eureka Myth, the Lone Creator Myth and the Constraints Myth. I also appreciated that the book is under 200 pages in length, and is easy to dip in and out of. Today's readers of business books, many of whom suffer from time poverty, will enjoy Burkus' straight forward, cut-to-the-chase, high value-added writing style.
