

great
BOOKS
&
STORIES

The Quest for Creative Inspiration

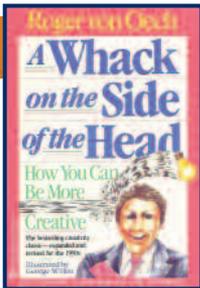
Great Books and Cool Tools

By Bob Kodzis

On this search for the muse, I've had the good fortune to speak to some truly inspirational creative people. They've included some very successful writers, artists, designers, performers and even a few Disney Imagineers.

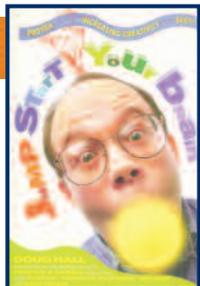
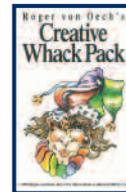
After speaking to a dozen of these masters of the right brain, I noticed an interesting trend: Every one of these pros included books and reading among their top creative resources.

That thought inspired me to write this tribute to some of the coolest and greatest books ever written about creativity and creative thinking. This is not a critic's view of creative literature. These are half a dozen really good, fun books and tools that have helped many creative souls to expand the way they think. I have used the ideas and the wisdom from these texts in more cases than I can remember. As with most books I recommend, this batch has lots of pictures.



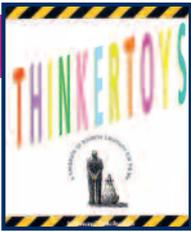
A Whack in the Side of the Head - Roger Von Oech

This was one of the first books I ever read about creativity and creative problem solving. Von Oech's classic handbook really simplifies and distills the creative process and includes some very cool black and white drawings by artist George Willett. His "Creative Whack Pack" is a companion set of brainstorming cards that I have used many times to help break groups out of the box. Fun stuff! I also recommend Von Oech's follow-up to "Whack" called "A Kick in the Seat of the Pants". In spite of the violent titles, these are both painless guides to creativity.



Jump Start Your Brain - Doug Hall

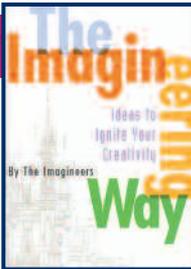
Doug Hall is a creative genius. He is a world class innovator and has created a couple of true creative havens – the Eureka Ranch and the Eureka Mansion, both in Ohio. Each place is designed purely for the purpose of creative collaboration and innovation. His clients spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for a weekend of innovation with Hall's trained brains [Doug's friends and colleagues who understand how to generate high volumes of incredible ideas]. A former Procter and Gamble product development guru once known as "the barefoot executive", Hall has put all of his creative cards on the table, demystifying the creative process and offering some very fun and effective approaches to innovation. I read this book just before facilitating a brainstorming session full of rollercoaster designers and it provided me with just the edge I needed to unleash the group creativity of some wildly inventive people. This one is well worth the read.



Thinkertoys - Doug Hall

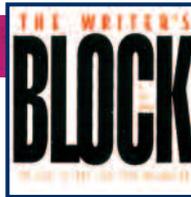
A friend handed me this book and said, "You have to read this book. I am not kidding... It actually made me more creative." That was quite a boast for a book. I read it over the next three days. I am now handing this book to you and telling you: "You have to read this book. It made me more creative."

Michalko's SCAMPPER technique of exploring and exploiting creative opportunities opened more than a few doors in my brain. I bet it will do the same for you. Michalko has also developed a set of companion brainstorming cards called a ThinkPak. While a little tougher to master than the Whack Pack, these cards are an excellent tool to guide a fun, high-impact creative problem solving expedition.



The Imagineering Way - the Imagineers

I work with many current and former Imagineers. They are cool and quirky crew who are among the most naturally creative "adults" I have ever known. When these folks give creative advice, I listen. You should too. True to the "Imagineering Way", this book has no real form or structure. It is a series of individual essays, observations, quotes and stories aimed at unlocking the essence of individual and team creativity. There are a lot of jewels in this collage of innovative thought and a few strong themes that pull it all together. It's a quick and easy read, and in the end, it will make you wish you were an Imagineer.



The Writer's Block - Jason Rekulak

While I fully recommend this tiny powerhouse tool, I have to say that it is not really a book. It's more of a little cube full of creative sparks. Don't be fooled into thinking that this 2"x2"x2" book is just for writers. It's a fantastic tool to ignite interesting stories and fascinating ideas in anyone. Find a copy. The world needs more interesting stories.



Orbiting the Giant Hairball - Jason Rekulak

This final offering is one of my all time favorites. I had heard legend of Gordon MacKenzie at a time when I was feeling pretty suffocated by a corporate role in a very conservative organization. Little did I know how he would help to develop my creative courage and my unwillingness to sacrifice my individuality for "the corporate good". MacKenzie is the former Hallmark Cards idea guru whose official job title was Creative Paradox. (He created the title for himself). This book is a treasure for anyone who wants to make creativity soar within big, bureaucratic organizations [giant hair balls].

MacKenzie has compiled some great stories, examples and drawings that illustrate how to let the creative spirit shine through – in spite of all forces against it. I've given this book, as a gift, to more creative of my friends than any other. It has the power to educate, inspire and liberate a tethered creative soul. Fly; be free...or at least orbit.

I have read dozens of books that don't come close to the wisdom offered in these mighty volumes, and a few that do come close, but I have run out of space in this issue. Please make the time to find one of these great books. They are well worth the investment of money and time. And who knows, you might just get that much needed whack in the side of the head.