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Unlock Your Creative Ideas With This Magic Question

by: **Bill Stainton** (reading – 7.2. - 13.2.)

It happens virtually every morning.

You wake up, and there in the paper, or online, or on TV, is a success story. (Yes, they're there. Sometimes you have to wade through the garbage.) Some entrepreneur, some company, some industry has come up with a game-changer. It might be Elon Musk, or the folks at Apple, or some person you've never heard of from some small town you've never heard of. But they've done it. They've come up with something brilliant - a breakthrough.

And you think, "Good for them," but somewhere, deep down inside, a little part of you dies. Because, once again, it wasn't you.

But what if you could turn that around? What if you could find a way to turn their success into your success? What if there was a way that you could wake up virtually every morning to a ready-made "breakthrough workshop?"

You can. And it comes down to one, simple five-word question:

"How is this like that?"

I call it the Magic Question.

The root of practically all creativity is in taking two or more things that don't normally go together and finding a surprising connection. When you ask the Magic Question, you're forcing your brain to do just that.

I recently conducted a creativity workshop for a brilliant group of credit union marketers. For one activity, I asked a portion of this group to come up with as many answers as they could to this question: "How is working with multiple generations [one of the challenges they had identified earlier] like... an egg?"

Why "an egg"? No reason. I just picked it at random. But it forced them to look at the challenge through a different lens. Twenty minutes later, they had not only come up with answers, they had come up with an entire marketing campaign-complete

with copy, tag lines, visuals, and much more. In just twenty minutes!

From an egg.

Now, what if, instead of an egg, you were to use someone else's breakthrough idea as your starting point? What if, tomorrow morning, you were to do these things, in this order:

Wake up, search for, and find the success story.

Gather your team.

Review the success story.

Ask this version of the Magic Question: "How is what this person/company/industry did like us? How can we take what they did and apply it to our business?"

Spend at least 20 minutes coming up with answers.

Nothing is out of bounds; no answer is too outlandish. That's because any idea, no matter how silly, could be what I call "the idea that leads to the idea."

The only unacceptable answer to "How is this like that?" is, "It's not." There are always connections, when you choose to look for them.

And one of those connections might just be your next million-dollar idea.

About The Author

For 15 years, Executive Producer Bill Stainton led his team to more than 100 Emmy Awards and 10 straight years of #1 ratings. Today Bill helps leaders achieve those kinds of results--in THEIR world and with THEIR teams. His website is <http://www.BillStainton.com>

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14 Fast Facts About Leonardo Da Vinci

by: **Joanne Perkins** (reading – 14.2. - 20.2.)

1. Da Vinci was the first to explain why the sky is blue, having realised how the air scatters light about.

2. He is widely credited with coming up with the idea of contact lenses, which he did so in his 1508 publication Codex of the eye, Manual D.

3. He was a vegetarian and believed animals should be free; as such, he would often purchase caged birds just so he could then set them free.

. He created designs for many things that would take centuries to be realised, including helicopters, solar power technology, tanks and calculators, to name just a few.

5. He was fascinated with form and this fascination can be seen in one of his most famous pieces, The Vitruvian Man, which sets out the proportions of the human body.

6. One of the many things da Vinci studied was river

erosion; from this he came to realise that the Earth was in fact older than what was claimed in the Bible.

7. He disproved another Biblical story by claiming that it wasn't Noah's ark that was responsible for fossils being found on mountainsides, but actually falling sea levels.

8. Though undoubtedly one of the greatest creatives ever to have lived, da Vinci didn't have a particularly high opinion of his many contributions to human knowledge.

9. Even though da Vinci is exceptionally famous for his paintings, just over a dozen are currently thought to still be in existence.

10. A number of da Vinci's designs have actually been built; some were found to work, while others were found to be impractical.

11. Making extensive notes was something that da Vinci had the habit of doing. Throughout his lifetime he made thousands upon thousands of pages

of notes, including over 200 on corpses he gained permission to dissect.

12. Undoubtedly his most famous painting is the Mona Lisa. Arguably the most famous painting in the world, no one to this day knows exactly who the subject of the painting is. There have been plenty of theories put forward, of course, but none have been proven yet.

13. At one point da Vinci was nearly sentenced to death for sodomy. No witnesses came forward to speak against him, so the case was dismissed and da Vinci was permitted to live.

14. The Mona Lisa has been on permanent display at the Louvre in Paris since 1797 and is seen by over 6 million people a year.

About The Author

Joanne Perkins is a Berkshire-based artist with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art. She specialises in painting Berkshire landscapes and loves capturing the natural beauty of her local countryside. She is happy to

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12 Fast Facts About Vincent Van Gogh

by: **Joanne Perkins** (reading – 21.2. - 27.2.)

1. He wasn't interested in art for most of his life; it wasn't until he was 27 that he started painting, though he did many drawings throughout his childhood and early 20s.

2. He wasn't afraid to cast himself as the subject of his paintings, creating over 30 self-portraits in the space of four years.

3. The last 10 years of his life were extremely prolific; during this time, he created over 900 paintings, which works out at one painting every 40 days.

4. There are conflicting stories about the famous ear incident; it's commonly believed that Vincent cut off his own ear after having a fight with a friend, though others believe his artist friend Paul Gauguin, a famous painter in his own right, was responsible for cutting it off. Many believe his whole ear was cut off; in fact, it was only a small part of his ear lobe.

5. Unlike lots of other influential and famous artists, Van Gogh was mostly self-taught and had very little artistic training before he started creating his works.

6. However, he did attend an art school in Antwerp. He did this for a few months before his death. By this time in his life, he'd produced most of his masterpieces.

7. The Red Vineyard is the only painting he sold in his entire lifetime; it wasn't until after he died that he started to gain popular appreciation and his paintings started to sell in huge numbers.

8. His most famous painting, arguably, is The Starry Night, which depicted the view from his bedroom at an asylum for the mentally ill in the French town of Saint-Remy-de-Provence.

9. Throughout his lifetime he suffered from various mental conditions. The culmination of these afflictions happened in 1890 when Vincent shot himself; he died two days later aged 37. However, some people claim he was actually shot by a local teenager.

10. Sunset at Montmajour was publicly unveiled in 2013 as the most recently discovered Van Gogh painting. It's now on display at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.

11. Vincent's closest friend was his brother Theo. He wrote over 800 letters to his brother throughout his life. Theo financially supported his brother while he tried to make himself a success. The two are buried side by side.

12. It's thanks to Theo's wife that we know of Vincent's work today. After Vincent's death, she became determined to make Vincent's works get the recognition she thought they deserved.

About The Author

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11 Fascinating Facts About Art

by: **Joanne Perkins** (reading – 28.2. - 6.3.)

1. Red Vineyard at Arles was the only painting that Vincent van Gogh sold during his lifetime. Though he didn't enjoy much success throughout his life, after death he went on to become one of the world's most popular and influential artists. While Vincent van Gogh was alive, he created over 900 paintings, as well as over 1,000 sketches and drawings. His wife dedicated herself to getting his work recognised. It's safe to say she succeeded.

2. The word 'art' is very subjective; the Oxford Dictionary offers 12 definitions of what art actually is.

3. Paint tubes may not seem that important today, but without them, art as we know it would be a lot different. The invention of paint tubes allowed artists to venture outside with their painting supplies and capture the world around them more easily. This led to the Impressionist movement, which continues to influence and inspire many artists all over the world to this day.

4. Studies have found that children who study art are more likely to have higher grades than those who don't study art.

5. If Monet's father had had his way, his son would have been a grocer, not a painter.

6. Pablo Picasso completed his first drawing when he was nine. It was of a man riding a horse during a bullfight. He completed his first serious painting, which depicted his father, mother and sister kneeling at an altar, when he was 15.

7. Michelangelo worked for a total of nine consecutive popes. His art career was extraordinary in itself: he worked for some 70 years and was widely regarded as one of the leading creatives and visionaries of the Renaissance. Pope Julius II was the first pope Michelangelo worked with and Pope Pius IV was the last.

8. Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night* is a depiction of the view of Saint-Remy-de-Provence, a small town in the South of France. Vincent van Gogh created

this painting while staying at the Saint-Paul-de-Mausole, a psychiatric hospital. The painting is actually the view from his window.

9. The Scream by Edvard Munch is a very famous painting, but did you know the artist actually created five different versions of this painting? He created the first two in 1893 using crayon and tempera on cardboard and the third with pastels. The fourth version is a black and white lithograph. The fifth version was created owing to the popularity of the previous versions.

10. Before the 19th century, artists would have to mix their oil paints by hand whenever they wanted to paint.

11. The Olympic Games used to award medals for works of art inspired by sports. These medals were handed out in the games from 1912-48.

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local countryside. She is happy to accept all queries and questions. For more information about Joanne, her work and her current projects visit:

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