



## The Deliberate Creative Podcast with Amy Climer

### Transcript for Episode #002: 3 Elements Needed for Creativity

May 27, 2015

**Amy Climer:** Hey everyone welcome to episode number two. Today we're talking about – what do you need in order to be creative. If you've heard me talking on [Episode Zero](#) or [Episode One](#), you'll know that I believe we all have incredible capacity to be creative. It's really just a matter of tapping into it and figuring it out. You've also heard me talking about the importance of believing we are creative and that belief is really important but, it's only the beginning. There are three specific elements that researchers have found are present in all creative people and that's what we're going to dive in to today. Most of this research is from Teresa Amabile at Harvard Business School and I'll put the reference in the show notes for you all. By the way the show notes can be found at [Climerconsulting.com/002](http://Climerconsulting.com/002).

Let's talk about what's needed for creativity. Three things Dr. Amabile has figured out. The first is intrinsic motivation, the second is expertise, and the third is creative thinking skills. We're going to talk about each of those one at a time. We'll break them down and dive into each one. First is intrinsic motivation. If you want to be creative that desire to be creative really needs to come from within. Intrinsic motivation is that motivation that comes from inside of you versus extrinsic motivation is when you're motivated by something outside of yourself like money, rewards, or that you're going to get something, if you do this you'll get that or you'll avoid something. The Carrot and Stick approach is extrinsic motivation. Daniel Pink has a great book called *Drive* where he offers a lot of information about intrinsic motivation. He says intrinsic motivation is about 3 things – autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Let's talk about those three.

First there's Autonomy. Autonomy is where we get some freedom and say on how things go or how we contribute when we have no control it makes it harder for us to be creative. It also means we don't have autonomy, but we need that freedom in order to be creative, we need that autonomy.

The second thing we need is mastery. Mastery is where we're striving to get better at something. We have an opportunity for growth. It's sort of related to your intrinsic desire to



learn, like if you're excited about learning then that contributes to your intrinsic motivation. Let's say for instance that I'm trying to design a new website and I want this to be the coolest most creative website ever. In the process of working on that website I'm going to get better on what I'm doing and that will help motivate me and keep me excited. Whether that's exploring Wordpress or understanding design better, I'm going to get better at those things. That's what mastery is about.

The third is the sense of purpose that I'm striving toward something bigger than just myself - that it matters to other people besides just me. When I think about this podcast I get excited because I feel like I might help someone else be more creative and that's really exciting to me. I'm not doing this to listen to myself talk. That doesn't motivate me; that's not very exciting. But, this idea that I might be impacting others is very exciting. That contributes to my intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the first thing you need to be creative and then the three things you need for intrinsic motivation are autonomy, mastery and purpose.

The next thing you need to be creative is expertise and expertise means you need to know something about the area you want to be creative in. If you want to be creative by designing buildings, you need to know something about architecture and engineering. If you want to design an innovative way to teach someone something you need to understand how people learn. Now, this doesn't mean you have to get that information the traditional way, it doesn't mean you have to have a college degree in teaching in order to teach well. In fact sometimes not having a college degree in something can help you be more creative. Also an expert doesn't mean decades of experience, sometimes depending on the area and depending on who else you're working with six months can make you an expert. If you've dug in to something for six months you might know a lot more than a lot of people out there about that particular thing and that may be enough to help you become more creative. I particularly wanted to make that point because I don't want you to feel like "well maybe when I'm 65 I might be creative." No you don't have to wait that long.

In some fields you're more likely to be creative at different times of your life depending on the peak point. For instance, probably when you're 65 you're not going to be a very creative NFL Football Player because your body just is not capable of doing it anymore. But you're going to be more creative in a particular field perhaps in your 20s maybe 30s, depending. You're probably not going to be super creative in your first year though, that's where the expertise comes in. The more you learn something, the more you understand it, then the more you can then make adjustments and change things.



The other point I want to make about expertise is it doesn't exclude cross-pollination. That can actually be a very powerful combination. Let's say you get together an architect, engineer, and an artist and all three of them are working together on a particular project. It could end up being much more creative than any one of them working individually. Their different backgrounds and their expertise can really come together and be quite amazing. And we'll explore in some future episodes more about teams and team development and how those teams can work well together and be more creative together.

Just to review, the first two points we've talked about are intrinsic motivation and expertise. The third element you need in order to be creative is creative thinking skills. This is where you understand the creative problem solving process; you understand how ideas are developed. There's this myth out there that creative people are born creative, it is complete crap. It is completely false; it is not true. There's also a myth that creative people are just naturally know how to be creative, no not really. They have worked at it for a long time. In some cases they started working at it when they were 6, 7 or 8 years old. They were trying to figure out problems and working through like – well okay, I need to kind of explore some different things and then I'll pick one that works then I'll go in depth on that particular thing.

The point is creative thinking skills could be developed with practice. Let me talk a little bit about what we know about creative thinking skills and how we know what we know. Most of the creativity research has happened the last 50 to 60 years and in that time particularly probably in the 1950s through 1980s numerous researchers were looking at the creative thinking process that humans naturally go through. What they did is they looked at highly creative people. They looked at artist and dancers and musicians and scientists and writers and tried to get this really diverse set of people and looked at what they do, what's their process, what are they going through in order to be more creative in their work. Different researchers have identified different processes but really they're all the same, they all overlap and have a lot of similarities with each other. The process that I know the best is the Creative Problem Solving process that was first developed in the 50s by guy named Alex Osborn but we'll talk more about that in the future episode. What's important for you to know right now is that there are specific steps to follow that lead you through the entire creative process.

Step number 1 is you are identifying the problem or the challenge. What is it you're trying to be creative in – are you trying to write a new piece of music? Are you trying to come up with solving some sort of physics problem? Are you trying to invent something new? You identify what the situation is and then you come up with ideas that address that challenge. You need to



come up with a lot of ideas not just one or two. Dozens, maybe hundreds, that's where a lot of the creativity comes in. In fact that sometimes we think of this as the stereotypical creative process but that's only one component of it, coming up with ideas is only a quarter of the creative process. That's step number 2.

Step number 3 is taking those ideas, selecting the best ones and developing those ideas more thoroughly. Finally you implement the ideas. This process is iterative, meaning you go through it over and over during your creative journey, continually refining things along the way. Once you're in that implementation you continue to develop small ideas, refining them, adjusting them, incorporating them into your process. And this concept connects back to what I talked about in [Episode One](#) about the definitions of creativity and innovation. That iterative, creative process is why creativity includes implementation. Creativity is not only coming up with ideas, it's applying those ideas, putting them in action. That implementation stage is where things get refined and you need creativity in that stage as well. You're not just in project management mode at that point you're still using creativity.

Alright, we have talked about the three things you need in order to be creative – intrinsic motivation, expertise, and creative thinking skills. Intrinsic motivation I want you to think about how can you get more excited about being creative? Is there a particular project you want to explore, you want to work on, or is there situation you're trying to figure out? What gets you excited about being more creative and innovative?

The second expertise - do you have the experience and skills you need? If not what can you do to gain those or can you collaborate with someone else who has those skills and experience?

Third, are the creative thinking skills. In the next episode we'll specifically explore the creative problem solving process and I'll provide you more in-depth overview. Then the four episodes after that one we're going to go into each of those four stages. We'll spend one episode per stage and I'll be giving you some tools that you can use to apply that both with yourself and with groups.

As usual at the end I want to tell you about some resources available to you. First of use me as a resource. If you have topic requests or questions about creativity you want answered on the show send me an email, my email address is [Amy@Climerconsulting.com](mailto:Amy@Climerconsulting.com) that's spelled as A-M-Y @ C-L-I-M-E-R Consulting dot com and I'll try to incorporate your questions into a future shows. Also you're welcome to sign up for my newsletter to get more great content about creativity innovation you can go to [Climerconsulting.com](http://Climerconsulting.com) and you can sign up there. Third, let me know



how you're incorporating these three things we talked about today into your life. How are you intrinsically motivated? What's your area of expertise or what are you trying to get better at so that you can have some expertise? Are you using creative thinking skills in your process?

I hope that this was helpful. I look forward to your comments. I look forward to you feedback. You all have a wonderful week and I'll see you next time. Bye!