



## Creative Idea Generator #1: Blank, Diamond, Squiggle

**Background:** When it comes to gaining a competitive edge, creativity is rapidly becoming one of the hot topics of discussion. It is one of the areas that is almost impossible to copy. It is therefore sustainable. And what business would not want to have a sustainable competitive edge in at least one of the things it did? To find a little slice of uniqueness – in the market and/ or in your team(s). *Rarity attracts and rarity sells.*

**The Problem:** Creative ideas, thoughts or moments often come to us from 'out of the blue'. But you cannot regularly rely on this for generating creative ideas.

**The Solution:** I have prepared a technique that I have adopted, adapted, and designed to help people break out of the normal way of thinking: to find some creativity that can be used to progress and ultimately benefit your business.

*"Luck is not coincidental. It is the meeting place between preparation and opportunity." (Yarin Kimor, The Magic of Creative Thinking).*

That's what we are about to do here with Idea #1: Prepare your brain for opportunity.

### Idea #1: Blank, Diamond, Squiggle

Do this as an individual and then as a group.

Each person takes three pieces of paper – the size of the paper is not important. Take one piece of paper (#1) and draw a squiggle (or ripple or sine wave) down the middle of the page. Now place it at arm's length in front of you.

On the second piece of paper (#2), draw a small diamond in the middle. Colour it in (colour is not important) so that it is a solid form. Now, place this piece of paper to the right of the one with the squiggle on it.

Leave the third piece of paper (#3) completely blank and place it between the other two papers in front of you.

I hope I have communicated this well. *Communication is really important and, surprisingly, something that is generally done quite badly.*

These three pieces of paper represent your abilities with whatever it is you are focusing on e.g. your level of creativity, service to customers, ability to develop new ideas, market products efficiently, or communicate effectively.





The 3 pieces of paper signify that, as an individual, group or business, you are:

#1 (Squiggle) Okay, but not great. Sort of acceptable but can certainly improve.

#2 (Diamond) Excellent at whatever it is I/we do. E.g. extremely focused/ capable/ completely understood. I/we can readily justify this choice.

#3 (Blank) Not good at all e.g. unclear and confused messaging/ communication/ marketing/ sales/ programming/ coding/ strategy.

You are now set up for **The Challenge:**

Personally think about your creative talents and chose a piece of paper that represents your own abilities.

Find someone and ask them if your choice is a fair representation of those abilities. This might be quite difficult to do. Any idea what many of your colleagues' level of creativity is? *This is the first thing to realise: we rarely know what our colleagues' creative talents are.*

Now, do the exercise together as a group, with only three pieces of paper. You may not be able to do this as you do not know what your collective ability is. *This is the second thing to realise: getting to know your ability as a collective is difficult* – it is not the sum total of all your creativity as individuals. That would be way too simple and rather mathematical an approach. There are plenty of wonderfully creative musicians who play in awfully uncreative 'super' bands e.g. Asia (sorry if you liked them).

Now chose a topic e.g. customer service, and do the exercise based on what you think you are seen as by your competitors, or more directly by your customers. This is hard and you may find that there is considerable disagreement amongst the group as to the paper you chose.

Remember that communication is incredibly important. Justifications and reasoning should be used to explain your choices. Many people will use intuition (that inner feeling that calls upon experience and wisdom and cannot be explained using reasoning). There is nothing wrong with using intuition.

**Takeaway:** Get to know yourself and your colleagues' creative abilities better than you presently do. You'll be amazed at some of the creative things people are capable of, given a little space, and time and the encouragement of others.

More ideas to come...

