How Anyone Can Turn Into A Creative Genius

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Lior Zoref Author, 'Mindsharing'

GIULIA VIRGILIO/500PX

A few years ago I was invited to give a TED talk about crowdsourcing. When I started to prepare for the talk, I brainstormed ways I could share my ideas in a more creative and engaging manner. When I hit a roadblock in my thinking, I turned to my crowd of friends and followers on Facebook and Twitter and asked them, "How do you think I can best create an 'Aha' moment for people who are trying to make sense of crowdsourcing?"

Instead of brainstorming solo, I decided that there was no better way to explain crowdsourcing then to ask my crowd how to do so. I call this practice *Mindsharing*, a purposeful and pointed crowdsourcing effort to access the collective wisdom of a big crowd.

After seeking advice from my crowd I received many ideas about how to approach my TED presentation, some bad and some good. The most interesting piece of advice that I received was from a sixteen-year-old who suggested I recreate a famous crowdsourcing experiment where eight hundred people at a country fair were asked to guess the weight of a slaughtered and dressed ox. While no one individually knew the weight of the ox, the crowd collectively guessed the weight of the animal when their individual guesses were tallied and the median weight determined. The collective intelligence of this crowd was also more accurate than any of the estimates of cattle experts that were solicited separately from the crowd.

This idea seemed just crazy and exciting enough to really engage my audience. What did I have to lose? So, I reached out to TED to see if I could bring a real ox onstage with me during my presentation. Two weeks later I was notified that the TED team had secured an ox from a company that delivers animals to Hollywood movies. Not only did I have an ox, I had a movie-star ox. Reaching out to my crowd allowed me to harness this one incredible and creative idea that ended up making all the difference when delivering my TED Talk.

This approach to finding creative ideas and solutions is not limited to individuals. Many corporations are using this strategy (often called open innovation) to get new product ideas or find solutions to problems. Procter & Gamble is one of the most experienced and long-term leaders of crowdsourcing.

In 2001, it launched a platform called "Connect + Develop." This platform allows P&G to crowdsource for creativity and innovation, and as a result, thousands of new products have been developed. By publishing a list of what it is looking for — this could be a new product, a new way of manufacturing something, or a creative idea for packaging — Procter & Gamble calls its program an "open door to the world" and receives more than four thousand creative ideas a year from this pioneering form of Mindsharing.

Idea Bounty is another Mindsharing platform for companies to crowdsource creativity. It's a way for a company to work with thousands of "creatives" at one time. People send their ideas in response to the company's brief. If an idea is used, the company pays the predetermined "bounty" or reward offered for the best creative idea or solution. The type of Mindsharing that Idea Bounty is using (along with other companies such as GeniusRocket, Victors & Spoils, crowdSPRING, and DesignCrowd) is helping to usher in a new era of creativity — making it transparent, accessible, and affordable.

Many other companies are letting the crowd build upon the creative ideas of one another. Amazon Studios allows screenwriters to post their screenplays and has the crowd decide which premises and scripts should be made into a feature-length movie. 99designs is a crowdsourced platform for creative design. A big crowd of hobbyists and professional designers offer their design ideas for logos, business cards, and even book covers.

Mindsharing helps people and organizations seeking out an innovative idea, a never-before-found solution, or a new approach to an old problem. Innovation that makes our lives easier and more joyful.

Together we are much more creative and smart than we can ever be alone.

Lior Zoref is the author of Mindsharing: The Art of Crowdsourcing Everything.