



Creative Process

The creative process involves the eternal struggle between opposing forces: order vs. chaos, tradition vs. innovation, imagination vs. reality. Conflict is at the core of all creativity. Yes, conflict can be rough, with obstacles and setbacks and tough decisions—but the final product will emerge from this turmoil as something beautiful and perfect, like a diamond from coal. Then again, when minds agree and communication is clear, the creative process can sometimes be a smooth, pleasurable ride through placid waters. Either way, we're totally committed and completely into what we're doing. That's not to say the process is unpredictable, though—we have a series of well-defined steps which we abide by when tackling any project. Here's a breakdown of our process.

Step 1: Come on, Admit it

You know what your problem is? Your problem is that you need to admit that you have a problem. Only after admitting you have a problem can you then overcome it. We come across a lot of problems in the design industry—especially during the creative process. It may seem like common sense to simply admit that there's an obstacle when meeting an obstacle—but the acceptance of a problem means we can then direct all our energies towards solving it.

Step 2: What the Hell is It?

Okay, so we've accepted the problem—but what the hell is it? What are its dimensions, its proportions, its characteristics? Some research may be called for. In war as in the creative process, you must know the enemy if you expect to defeat him. The problem must be defined as clearly and accurately as possible—no false assumptions, no hollow hopes, just the facts. Then goals can be set and limits can be established.

Step 3: Plan of Attack

The foundation has been laid. The homework has been done. Now it's time to set the map out on the table and start thinking up a plan of attack. Lines are drawn, diagrams are made, numbers are added up—so many factors involved, so many possibilities. There's not always a clear direction, sometimes a number of different approaches seem equally viable...

Step 4: Judgment Day

...but a choice must be made. Passivity just doesn't cut it. Making a decision can be daunting, especially when it means scrapping the whole blessed thing and starting back at zero. But if that's what it takes, so be it. Courage is called for—leadership. A designer is (or at least should be) a leader, a keen judge between what works and what doesn't. Small changes may be necessary, or big ones. It's all about looking at the cold hard reality of the matter with unblinking eyes and slicing through it with human reason and will.

Step 5: Making the Leap

Ideas, plans, schemes are all fine and dandy—the world's full of them. The real trick is putting them into practice, transforming the intellectual into the physical. It's a big leap, and it's a leap only the skilled and self-assured are able to make. There are no doubt thousands of brilliant ideas that have never become realities because the execution was poor. It's not always "what" a thing is, but rather "how" it is. We've got the "how" down pat.

Step 6: The Public's Not an Enemy

For whose sake, pray tell, are we doing all this? The public's, of course—and so they must be consulted. Public feedback is not always kind, and that is a good thing. If all we ever did was go around giving each other backrubs and high-fives, nothing of any worth would ever be accomplished. The world would sink into a cesspool of monotony and dissolution. Yes, the public can be harsh—but it's important to remain flexible and not get emotionally attached to one's work. This calm detachment is the mark of a great designer.