

THE SPARK AND THE GRIND

Ignite the Power of Disciplined Creativity

ERIK WAHL

ERIK WAHL is a graffiti artist, motivational speaker and entrepreneur. He is the founder of his own consultancy firm, The Wahl Group, and has spoken at conventions organized by Microsoft, Disney, NBC, Honda and other Fortune 500 companies. Erik Wahl is famous for making paintings of thinkers, leaders and cultural icons during his presentations which he then auctions to raise money for charities. He is also a TED speaker and the author of *Unthink: Rediscover Your Creative Genius*. Erik Wahl is a graduate of the University of San Diego.

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MAIN IDEA

Creative genius is often immortalized as a eureka moment where one event triggers the spark of inspiration. People love the idea of an aha! moment – like when Isaac Newton supposedly had an apple fall on his head and discovered gravity.

Creativity really doesn't work that way. Isaac Newton, for example, had been working hard for twenty years to immerse himself in math and science before he made any breakthroughs. His notebooks had more than a million words in them by the time he made his discoveries. At most, he was a hard worker who was intensely curious.

And even then, if Newton had noticed gravity but didn't add the grind of execution and providing proof for his discoveries, he would today be remembered merely as someone who had some interesting ideas. To come up with something genuinely creative, you need both the spark and the grind.

Spark

S+G

Grind

The best way to set the stage for inspiration in the future is to treat creativity more like a lifestyle and less like a single serendipitous event. To achieve an ongoing and constant stream of fresh creative ideas, you have to live an authentically innovative life. That involves seven steps:



Step #1 – Trust the process Page 2

The first truth you have to understand is the spark always come to life in creative endeavors at the expense of the grind. If you want to be truly creative, you have to be both a grinder and an igniter.

Step #2 – Attach yourself. Page 3

To do creative work, you have to find and project your own "bone" – that which distinguishes you from everyone else. By all means take inspiration from others but don't try and mimic anyone. Attach yourself to the work and create things which are meaningful.

Step #3 – Keep your day job Page 4

To become a constant creator, start by exploring the opportunities to be creative which already exist in your current job. You'll find there are lots of opportunities for sparks right there but you've probably just glossed over them and ignored them.

Step #4 – Embrace a routine Page 5

It's not unusual for creatives to be considered as "nutters" or at the very least as eccentrics. That's okay but to be creative, it helps to embrace strict discipline about the way you approach things. It may not be sexy but discipline and grit boost creativity.

Step #5 – Defamiliarize Page 6

Another good way to spark your personal creativity is to defamiliarize the ordinary. Changing what you do day-to-day forces you to be agile and that mindset translates into more creativity. Make it your habit to regularly enter unfamiliar spaces.

Step #6 – Stay foolish Page 7

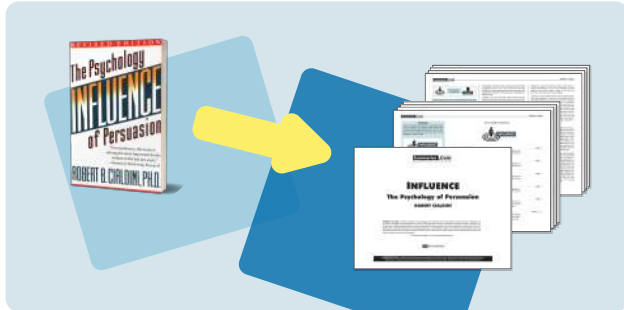
Amateurs are never afraid to try things out and push the boundaries just to see what results. Don't get so educated and so smart that you fear to try foolish things. Try stuff that others won't attempt and see what original results come bubbling to the surface.

Step #7 – Fall in love Page 8

The only way you will ever change the world with your art is if you are in love with what you do. Making money, getting accolades or seeking early retirement won't do it. You have to fall in love with your creations. Creativity is a love affair.

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