

# CREATIVITY: THE HEART OF MARKETING

By Tina Shaw, Associate Creative Director at Activision



Tina Shaw

Activision's Mobile, UA, Social, and Emerging Franchises Marketing Creative Team.

Over time, I have learned varied approaches from mentors & peers while also testing different tactics as they fit into my creative discipline and thought leadership. What I will share here is the result of that experience. From that, the biggest aspect I can relay is that creativity is subjective. There will always be more than one way to do something, but removing the personal and focusing on the need is paramount.

After changing industries and walking onto that gaming stage, I knew I would have to improvise as I swayed between what I already knew and what I had to learn about this new arena of data, OKRs, and KPIs – but most importantly, its players. As Jazz musician Miles Davis so accurately said, "To keep creating, you have to be about change."

That change is us, our brands, services, products, and audience. These will ebb and flow over time, and remaining relevant requires taking risks and innovating. We are inundated daily with loud visual clutter, so how do our brands stand out and foster an impactful connection while also generating engagement?

## Creative Thinking

It is one of the single most crucial elements in marketing. According to the 2023 World Economic Forum\*\*, creative thinking is rated as the 2nd most critical core skill. As we live and work in an increasingly complex reality, that complexity drives the need for analytical thinking, creative thinking, and our ability to be flexible/agile.

All three of these are at the core of marketing.

**Analytical:** We are presented with open problems.

**Creativity:** In what ways can we solve the problem to make authentic connections and drive returns?

**Flexibility and agility:** Are we nimble and able to reimagine and pivot if required?

After twelve years as an award-winning creative working on marketing 360 creative campaigns for prestigious television networks and entertainment agencies, I took the leap and changed industries to join the world of gaming as a Creative Director, leading

To illustrate further thought, Torild Oddane, a Norwegian researcher and associate professor at NTNU Business School, developed the KREM Model\*\*\*, which seeks to define how to creatively solve open problems. She built her model as...

**K: Creative competencies**, which are the ability to think outside the box and bring people together for their diverse perspectives that can challenge one another positively.

**R: Relational competencies** that allow for managing relationships and how we communicate.

**E: The expertise** one brings with them, as well as the unique skills to solve the open problem.

**M: The motivation** of the people trying to solve the open problem, because without it, it won't matter how skilled you are if you are not motivated to do so.

After learning more about the KREM model, I realized this is how I have approached and built my creative teams. I seek to build for diversity that reflects the player: their unique perspectives in life, those whose strengths cover another's weakness, one's rich experiences expanding those starting out, and ones who are willing to try something different, even if they make mistakes, so we can all learn and grow.

None of this would be possible without the support and ever-evolving analytical and creative collaborations of a full marketing team, a company's leadership, and the workforce driving it.

What we need to remember is that creativity belongs to everyone. In marketing, it helps us address the challenges of an unpredictable environment. It's how we solve problems, identify needs, adjust to the moment, manage and empower our teams, and connect our brand with our players.

So, what is the creative mindset? It's the ability to tie different aspects together at different times into a cohesive moment, a framework for storytelling. It's about not being fixed in a procedure but rather opening that procedure. A creative mindset can twist and turn with the collective ability to play with your marketing resources – whether it's data, budget, time, platform, people, or audience.

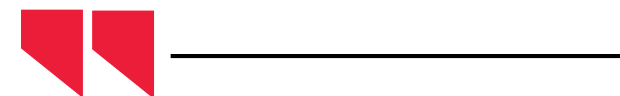
Creativity isn't just about ideas but about solving open problems with ideas. Most problems we solve daily are open problems without an ending. For example, a hip replacement or flying a plane is a closed problem, but to market a product, a service, or a business is an open problem. Meaning it has no instructions or a finite conclusion.

At Activision, my creative team and I are regularly presented with open problems. If we are launching a new game, we need to create awareness and build intent. We then will soft launch and A/B test ideas across territories to best determine what is most important to the players. After launch, we keep the lights on and connect with our players across social platforms to continue building the relationship.

Then, we repeat for each new season of the game. It is a constantly evolving creative and relationship-building cycle with a unique storytelling framework.

The biggest benefit to creative thinking is that creativity and innovation in marketing promote more than just the bottom line; it can have influential benefits across the business. It can inspire action from your players, differentiate you from competitors, build emotional connections with your audience, and align your teams toward one unifying goal.

If this way of thinking resonates with you, remember these five creative takeaways when you approach your next project.



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1. Creative thinking is more important now than ever, but not as important as it will become.
2. Creativity belongs to everyone; it's how we use it that differs.
3. The cornerstones of creativity are innovation, storytelling, and connection.
4. Offer one innovative idea for every five ideas that can elevate and enhance your brand.
5. The fear of making a mistake is the fastest way to kill creativity.

When we engage and connect creatively, our brands will be noticed, our content will be memorable, and our marketing will be effective. [Mkt](#)