



## How to Be More Creative

## 如何更具创造性

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About 10 years ago, the management professors Brian Lucas and Loran Nordgren encountered a **paradox**. On the one hand, we recognize that other people are more likely to make creative **breakthroughs** when they **persist**. Thomas Edison—for many the **personification** of creative genius—famously experimented with hundreds of materials before inventing the light bulb. On the other hand, when we feel **stuck** on a problem, most of us fail to see how successful we'll be if we just keep trying. We tend to believe that our creativity **plummets** over time—that if our best ideas don't come to us immediately, they won't come at all.

大约 10 年前，管理学教授布莱恩·卢卡斯和罗兰·诺德格伦发现了一个矛盾的现象。一方面我们认识到，一个人坚持不懈才更有可能取得创造性的突破。托马斯·爱迪生对许多人来说是创新天才的化身，在发明电灯泡之前他对数百种材料进行了实验，这人尽皆知。另一方面，当我们被一个问题困住时，大多数人都意识不到如果我们继续尝试，我们会有多成功。我们倾向于认为创造力会随着时间的推移而下降，如果我们不能立马想到最好的想法，那就永远想不出了。

Lucas and Nordgren call this **misperception** the “creative cliff illusion.” People **underestimated** the value of persistence. Though we tend to think our ability to come up with ideas is easily exhausted, we actually get more creative the longer we focus on a problem or task. One major reason for this is known as the “serial-order effect.” Each **successive** creative idea we have is likely to be better than the one that came before.

卢卡斯和诺德格伦把这种误解称为“创意悬崖错觉”。人们低估了坚

547 Words

**paradox** ['pærədəʊks] *n.* 矛盾的  
人（或事物、情况）；悖论 | He was  
a paradox—a loner who loved to chat  
to strangers. 他真是个矛盾人物，生  
性孤僻却又喜欢和陌生人闲聊。

**breakthrough** ['breikθru:] *n.* 重  
大进展，突破 | Scientists have made  
a major breakthrough in the  
treatment of cancer. 科学家在癌症  
治疗方面取得了重大突破。

**persist** [pə'sist] *v.* 坚持，执著；继  
续存在 | She persisted in her search  
for the truth. 她执着地追求真理。

**personification** [pə'sɒnɪfɪ'keɪʃn]  
*n.* 体现某品质或特点的人，化身；  
拟人化 | She was the personification  
of elegance. 她是典雅的化身。

**stuck** [stʌk] *adj.* 卡住的，动不了  
的；困住的；被难倒的 | If you get  
stuck on a difficult word, just ask for  
help. 如果遇到难的单词，就请求帮  
助。

**plummet** ['plʌmɪt] *v.* 暴跌，速降  
| Share prices plummeted to an  
all-time low. 股票价格暴跌到历史  
最低点。

**misperception** [ˌmɪspər'sepʃ(ə)n]  
*n.* 误解

**underestimate** [ˌʌndər'estimeɪt]

持不懈的价值。虽然我们倾向于认为我们的创新能力很容易耗尽，但实际上我们专注于一个问题或任务的时间越长，我们就越能想出新颖的想法。造成这种现象的一个主要原因被称为“序列位置效应”。在一连串创新想法中，每一个都可能比前一个更好。

The serial-order effect isn't always easy to see. When approaching a problem, we normally begin by cycling through strategies and approaches that don't work. This can feel both hard and useless. Most of us have **inherited** the belief that creativity—the result, we often think, of “being in the zone” or “achieving **flow**”—should feel easy, or “fluent.” And so we **associate** mental difficulty **with** **futility**.

序列位置效应并不容易看到。在处理一个问题时，我们首先想到的策略和方法通常是无效的。这会让人觉得难以应对，力不从心。我们大多数人都秉持着这样的信念：创造力（即我们经常认为的“进入化境”或“处于心流状态”的结果）应该让人感到轻松或“顺畅”。所以我们把精神上感到困难和徒劳无功联系在一起。

But **muddling through** bad ideas is a necessary step in the creative process. The first solutions that come to mind tend to be either **preexisting** ideas or popular wisdom. These are the paths of least resistance. Though avoiding them requires some work, it's the surest way to find original ideas that **elude** our **default** assumptions and strategies. Instead of interpreting difficulty as a sign of failure, we should see it as a **harbinger** of solutions.

但在创新过程中，让糟糕的想法先出现是必要的步骤。首先出现在脑海中的解决方案往往是既有的想法或流行的智慧。这些都是阻力最小的路径。虽然避而不用它们并不容易，但这是想出原创想法，避开我们的默认假设和策略的最可靠方法。我们不应将困难视为失败的标志，而应将其视为解决问题的预兆。

The serial-order effect applies to tasks that last minutes or days, but creativity also improves across years, decades, and even careers.

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v. 低估，轻视 | We underestimated the time it would take to get there. 我们低估了抵达那里所需的时间。

**successive** [sək'sesɪv] *adj.* 连续的 | The team has had five successive victories. 这支球队已经连胜五场了。

**inherit** [ɪn'herrɪt] v. 继承；接手；经遗传得到 | He inherited a fortune from his grandmother. 他从祖母那儿继承了一大笔财产。

◇ 背景知识

**flow**  
心流，指一种人们在专注进行某行为时所表现的心理状态，是一种将个人精力完全投注在某种活动上的感觉。心流产生的同时会有高度的兴奋及充实感。

**associate ... with ...** 把……和……联系在一起 | We naturally associate the name of Darwin with the doctrine of evolution. 我们在思想上很自然地把达尔文的名字和进化论联系在一起。

**futility** [fjuː'tɪləti] *n.* 无用，徒劳，白费 | an exercise in futility 无用之举

**muddle through** 胡乱应付过去 | There were some difficult questions but I managed to muddle through. 有几个难缠的问题，但我都支吾过去了。

**preexisting** [ˌpriːɪg'zɪstɪŋ] *adj.* 先前存在的，先于……而存在的

**elude** [ɪ'luːd] v. 避开，逃避；不记

序列位置效应适用于持续几分钟或几天的任务，而创造力也会在几年、几十年甚至整个职业生涯中得到提高。

In disciplines as varied as chemistry, economics, medicine, and physics, scientists tend to do their best work near age 40. Nobel Prize winners and inventors similarly do most of their best work from their late 30s to mid-40s. **Precocity** is fascinating because it's unusual, but the most reliable way to achieve a breakthrough is getting stuck and unstuck over and over again.

在化学、经济学、医学和物理学等各学科中，科学家往往在 40 岁左右取得最大的成就。同样，诺贝尔奖得主和发明家在将近 40 岁到 45 岁之间完成了大部分最重要的工作。年少功成名就之所以令人着迷，是因为它不同寻常，但实现突破的最可靠方法是一次又一次地陷入困境而后摆脱困境。

We can see the serial-order effect at play not only at the individual level but also at the scale of companies and markets. Contrary to the myth in business that you have to be first—that if you don't succeed early, you're **doomed** to fail—many of the most successful companies are those that enter markets whose **kinks** have been **ironed out** through early failures.

我们可以看到，序列位置效应不仅体现在个人层面，在公司和市场层面上也发挥着作用。商业神话推崇“第一至上”，如果你不尽早成功，那你就注定要失败，但与之相反，许多最成功的公司都是在市场的缺陷已经通过早期参与者的失败得以解决后才进入市场。

**Take** search engines. The Google co-founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page **revolutionized** search engines as the 22nd **entrant** into the market. Before Google came Archie, VLib, Infoseek, AltaVista, Lycos, LookSmart, Excite, Ask Jeeves, and more than a dozen other **also-rans**. Google didn't succeed just because it was the best product; it succeeded because Brin and Page had the **luxury** of learning from the products that **preceded** it.

以搜索引擎为例。作为第 22 个进入市场的公司，谷歌的联合创始人谢

得，不理解 | He eluded the police for 13 years. 他躲过了警方抓捕达 13 年。

**default** [dɪˈfɔːlt] *n.* 默认状态；常规做法；拖欠，违约 *v.* 违约 | You can change the default settings to suit your needs. 你可以根据需要改变默认设置。

**harbinger** [ˈhɑːbɪndʒə(r)] *n.* 预兆，兆头 | The crowing of the cock is a harbinger of dawn. 鸡鸣报晓。

**precocity** [priˈkɔːsəti] *n.* 早成，早熟

**doomed** [duːmd] *adj.* 注定的，命定的 | Their plans seemed doomed to failure. 他们的计划好像注定要失败。

**kink** [kɪŋk] *n.* 弯，结；问题，怪癖，奇想 | This should give us time to iron out any kinks. 这应该会给我们时间来解决这些问题。

**iron out** 消除，解决（尤指小问题或困难） | We need to iron out a few problems first. 我们需要先解决几个问题。

**take** [teɪk] *v.* 以……为例，将……作为例证 | Lots of couples have problems in the first year of marriage. Take Ann and Paul. 在婚后头一年里，许多夫妇都出现一些问题。安和保罗就是个例子。

**revolutionize** [ˌrevəˈluːʃənəɪz] *v.* 彻底改变，完全变革 | Over the past forty years plastics have revolutionised the way we live. 在过

尔盖·布林和拉里·佩奇彻底改变了搜索引擎。在谷歌出现之前，Archie、VLib、Infoseek、AltaVista、Lycos、LookSmart、Excite、Ask Jeeves 以及其他十几家失败者相继出现。谷歌的成功并不仅仅是因为它是最好的产品，而是因为布林和佩奇有机会从之前的产品中学习。

Persistence, however, is **underrated**. So the next time you're stuck, just remember: "You're more creative than you think you are."

然而，坚持的重要性被低估了。所以，下次你碰上难题时，只要记住：“你比自己想象的更有创造力。”

去的 40 年中，塑料彻底改变了我们的生活方式。

**entrant** ['entrənt] *n.* 新入行者，新职员，新生；参赛者

**also-ran** *n.* (比赛、选举等的) 失败者，落选者

**luxury** ['lʌkʃəri] *n.* 不常有的乐趣 (或享受、优势)；奢华；奢侈品

**precede** [pri'si:d] *v.* 在……之前发生 (或出现)，先于

**underrate** [ˌʌndə'reɪt] *v.* 过低评价，低估 | He's seriously underrated as a writer. 他是被严重低估的一位作家。

## ➤ 脉络梳理

- Para. 1-2 引出话题：人们通常低估了坚持不懈的价值，但实际上专注于一个问题的时间越长，就越能想出新颖的想法，这被称为“序列位置效应”
- Para. 3-4 指出我们首先想到的策略和方法通常是无效的，继续坚持才会有创新想法出现
- Para. 5-8 从个人和公司层面举例说明创造力会随着时间的推移而提高
- Para. 9 总结全文，强调坚持对创新的重要性

## ➤ 长难句拆解

状语 | 同位语从句，解释说明 myth  
Contrary to the myth in business that you have to be first  
补充说明 that you have to be first  
—that if you don't succeed early, you're doomed to fail—  
主句 | 定语从句，修饰 those | 定语从句，修饰 markets  
many of the most successful companies are those that enter markets whose kinks have been ironed out through early failures.