A review of
Idea-Links
by Jim Link
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Rating: 10
(The Official Ayers Rating Scale goes from 1-10. Discarding anything lower than 6 produces a net five-point scale from 6-10.)

Let's begin with a short quiz, just three true /false questions:
1. Creativity is an innate talent – you have it or you don't.
2. Creativity is all about the eureka moment.
3. Creativity is about wackiness and playfulness.

After you've determined your answers, then consider Jim Link's answers: False, False, and False. This book focuses on refuting these common misperceptions.

Link makes that case that being creative is akin to being organized. Yes, some are better at it than others. But all of us can improve through the diligent use of a small number of proven practices. What are those practices? Keep reading, but first let's look at the rest of the test.

Creativity is not about what happens in the moment, Link asserts. It's rather about all the work done behind the scenes over months or years that enables the eureka moment. He writes, "It's not the visible part of idea generation you want to emulate. It's the part you don't see – the foundation that allows the moment to happen." And that's the hard work of creativity.

Wackiness? Playfulness? No. Instead it's *inquisitiveness* and *acquisitiveness*. It's paying attention and analyzing. It means that every time your attention is caught, you get curious. What about that billboard (or movie or song or bar of soap or article of clothing) caught my attention? And then from that moment of being caught, you extract the *idea-link*. That's the *inquisitive* part. Then you have to catalog that and not in a mental note – for most of us, mental notes are too easily over-written thirty seconds later. That's the *acquisitive* part.

Link writes about the Toyota Prius and why it outsells the Honda hybrid. After thinking about what differed between the two cars, he extracted this idea-link:
Immediate feedback is a powerful motivator to get people to change behavior [Prius]
One difference is that the Prius gives you immediate feedback on how much gas you're *not* using. You can change your driving habits and see immediately how much better you're doing. So he distills that insight down to a dozen words or so and, importantly, tags it with the origin story. The tag is a powerful element to recall the context, the story from which the idea-link was pulled. Now that you have the idea-link stored, it is available at any point in the future when the situation you face triggers a thought related to motivation or behavior or feedback.

The first of Link's proven practices is crafting and storing idea-links to enable later creative moments. Here's how Link defines creativity: "Creativity – the act of idea generation – is about connecting old elements to new problems, or as I call these elements, *idea-links*." Thus we need a store of idea-links and a means to facilitate their connection to new situations.

A second proven practice also connects to inquisitiveness:
> "To get yourself into the discipline of asking multiple questions, you need to adopt your own Twenty Questions game. Each time you have a creative challenge, make it a game to generate twenty new questions about your problem. … For the purpose of simplicity, start all your questions with 'what if.'"

Here the focus is on *un-restrictedness* which complements inquisitiveness and acquisitiveness. It does not matter if the question seems absurd (What if Jay Leno were to run the meeting?). What matters is whether I can connect a stored idea-link to the problem of running the meeting.

Another proven practice Link calls creative reframing. The more ways you can look at a problem (i.e., the more frames or lenses you have), the greater the likelihood of coming upon one that offers a creative response. If idea-links focus on getting new raw material *into* your brain, then reframing focuses on getting that raw material *out* again, under new circumstances. Here Link points to the powerful role of analogies.

Since the book is partly how-to and partly why-to, it is just not possible to do it justice in a few hundred words. So let me close this brief review with one more quote:
> "I've posed this first question, Why Did We Stop Asking Why, to my audiences over the years and landed on two primary culprits. The first, curiosity isn't valued or emphasized by the organizations we work for, or worse, it's unwittingly devalued. The second, as organizations increase their focus on execution, there's no time or energy left for curiosity."

Need a dose of creativity in your life or your organization? Check out *Idea-Links*.

What is an idea-link? Where do they come from? Why are they essential? How are they used? The role of curiosity (inquisitiveness) along with acquisitiveness and unrestrictedness. The What-If questions. All about getting them in, then Reframing for getting them out. Use of analogies.

intro quote
> "long quote."

unpack.

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When you stop reading books to finish them and start reading to accumulate strategic principles and frameworks to look through as lenses, they'll jump off the page and join your ever-growing stockpile.

Researchers have found that keeping a resolution has little to do with willpower, even though lack of willpower is the most commonly cited reason for failing to make positive changes. … Failure to plan for success, not lack of willpower, is the most common reason a resolution fails … So don't think about converting your resolution to become more creative into action. Think through how to translate your resolution to become more creative into a plan. It's the plan, written down, that supports follow-through on your resolution ….