

Publication: IBD; **Date:** May 17, 2006; **Section:** Leaders & Success; **Page Number:** 4



[Back to press page](#)

DON'T BE AFRAID TO INNOVATE

Make Innovation Routine

By the time sunrise peeks through the window, Mick Quinn's at his desk, where he writes until 9 a.m. He takes a break until 11 and then he's back at it. Routine, says the former Wall Street chief, is vital for unearthing new thoughts.

"I think the key aspects are early start, late finish, set short deadlines, work on multiple projects simultaneously," the author of such books as "Power and Grace: An Adventure in Awakened Living" said recently. "Take breaks, get some exercise, play time, good food and, of course, good wine."

In many people's minds, creative folks loathe routine. Innovation's born of late nights, sleeping in and not knowing what each day holds, right? Wrong. To come up with good ideas, it actually helps to have some rituals and routines that keep the creative mind on track.

"Artists need structure, and many times we must devise it for ourselves," said creativity coach and author Julia Cameron.

To make innovation more of a regular event in your business or life, try to:

Have regular scene-change days. If you usually work on the couch, shift to a desk. If you're always on the phone, turn it off. If you're an indoor type, go sit on a porch.

"One of my most important routines is simple: Planning one or two days in the office where I use the plush chairs to work instead of my office," said Ron Dresner, president of Dennis PR Group.

Plan once-monthly field days.

Jil Wyland, president of graphics company Litigation Presentation, takes her designers off-site once a month for inspiration and production meetings. The team's also been known to hit a movie or a museum. "Right brain employees think differently," she said.

Implement a relaxation plan.

"A stressed out brain is not creative," said creativity expert Anne Miller, author of "Metaphorically Selling: How to Use the Magic of Metaphors to Sell, Persuade & Explain Anything to Anyone." Some ideas for teaching your brain to relax at will include shutting your door and playing jazz, doing yoga or working out. "In these 'feel good' states, you will always be more creative," Miller said.

Set creative goals. "Give goals each month, like learning three-tofive new 'tricks' in a relevant design program," Wyland said.

Get a handle on the money.

Taking care of the cash frees up a lot of creative energy. Wyland helps her staff plan their personal finances. "We built a spreadsheet that can plan five years in advance that shows them their weekly allowance after bills," she said. "Creatives are notoriously bad at money management and we want them to focus on work, not personal woes."

Hold regular mind-mapping sessions. Sure, mind mapping might seem routine, but the process, like brainstorming, can unhinge a load of ideas. How to do it? Write your problem in the center of a sheet of paper and then surround it with potential solutions or ideas.

"You can mind map anything," Miller said. "Opening up your idea faucet via mind mapping will generate large numbers of possible solutions quickly."

Story by: Amy Alexander