

## Curiosity and Research

Curiosity is an inborn trait. We all have it. The challenge is using and developing it. From birth your every sense is aimed at exploring and learning. People who want to grow go on asking questions with great intensity throughout their lives.

One of the most important things to question always and everywhere is accepted knowledge. Researchers' defined role is that of questioning everything. Communicators are researchers who rely upon their sense of curiosity to unravel mysteries and clarify things for their communities. In a democracy, the public relies on professional communicators to question authority and put the world in perspective. This is an exciting responsibility that requires attention to detail.

One of the world's most remarkable people – Leonardo da Vinci – has been called the most curious man ever. He wrote in one of his notebooks, "I roamed the countryside searching for answers to things I did not understand. Why shells exist on top of mountains... why the thunder lasts a longer time than that which causes it ... how the various circles of water form around the spot that has been struck by a stone, and why a bird sustains itself in air. These questions and other phenomena engage my thought throughout my life."

Da Vinci developed an investigative style that is still admired by all and in addition to his masterworks of art (Mona Lisa, The Last Supper) he pioneered the discipline of comparative anatomy, and was first to make casts of the brain and the ventricles of the heart. He pioneered modern botanical science, his physics studies anticipated the modern disciplines of hydrostatics, optics and mechanics. He also designed a snorkel, diving equipment, a submarine, a helicopter, the parachute and a flying machine. His contemplative, curious style put his thinking far ahead of his time. He poured his energy into important concepts.

Great concepts are key to quality communications. How do you choose a topic that's worthy of your time? How do you do the right research to unravel and explain the topic? Take the time to think things through before settling on a story concept. Curious minds ask great questions. You come up with a quality concept for a good communication by asking great questions, and you work to answer those questions by asking more questions.

In your research, begin by asking the simplest of questions that people are prone to overlook. Ask: Why is this a problem? Is this the real issue? Why have we always done it this way? Why is the emperor naked? Aim to raise questions that have not been asked before or ask the questions that have been asked, but ask them in a different way. Get results.

We're in an information age where those who tell a story well can dominate. The explosion of digital media has created a demand for good writers, researchers and communicators. It's a great field to be in right now. There is a quest for QUALITY. If you use your intellect and construct information in a quality way, you will be in demand; you will produce polished, professional communication, communication that sells, communication that pays off.

The completion of thorough research to gain vital details and descriptive background tied to your topic is key to communicating effectively. A weakness in young writers is presenting a thesis with no proof. Reflect respect for your audience's intellects; you have to back up what you say with the facts and attributions to prove your points – that kind of detailed information comes from thorough, effective research.

With digital communications, you don't have to be a millionaire to be a publisher with a worldwide audience. You only need access to a computer and a Web site. The power of the individual in the digital age is awesome, but remember the importance of using that power responsibly.

The Internet is a fantastic research resource. It's the answer to a communicator's prayers. It's a wonderful world of information. It's also convoluted. It's overloaded with junk you don't need and often misleading or incorrect. It is packed with propaganda and lies.

When you are curious, the Internet can be a revealing tool; for instance, it is a repository of some important government statistics such as census figures. Just remember to use the Internet with extreme care. Always crosscheck the information you get by finding the same details quoted by other sources. Also remember that the “invisible” Web is vast; when you use search engines, you are not seeing everything out there. Most information on the Internet is hidden. Don't think you could possibly have explored every piece of information on a topic by simply looking online.

Remember that officials' paper records and database files, newspapers, books, periodicals, films and other sources are often the only places to find some information. Only a small fraction of the world's knowledge is accessible through Google.

And when you get right down to it, there's nothing like talking face-to-face with another living human being to get detailed information. This process is called “interviewing,” and it is the ultimate form of research, because it is directly attributable to the original source.

There are a few slogans communicators regularly share; among them is this:

*If your mother says she loves you, check it out.*

It is extremely important for all communicators in all fields to verify information before placing it in a film, on television, online, in print. “If your mother says she loves you, check it out” means although you may think you know something, what you know may not be what you should know, and one way to know for certain is to VERIFY the details by checking them out with multiple – preferably non-Internet – sources.

In summation:

- Be curious.
- Take the time to come up with a great concept.
- Look for information from various sources.
- Verify.