

Creative Breakthrough Emergence: A Conversational Accomplishment
Executive Summary of PhD Dissertation, July 2014
Romi Boucher, PhD: CMM Fellow 2012

1. **What was the research problem?** Many people, organizations, institutions, and governments want and need to generate creative breakthroughs and foster creativity, but are not aware of what conversational conditions make their occurrence more likely. Although the creative collaborative process is dependent upon communication, not much was known about the ways in which people make *new and useful meaning* together such that creative breakthroughs could result. There have been few studies that have analyzed in situ group creativity with a robust communication theory capable of showing what actual kinds of conversations create new and useful meaning. The purpose of this research was to identify conversational conditions that facilitate creative breakthroughs in collaborative workgroups.
2. **What was the research question?** What are the conversational conditions that facilitate creative breakthroughs in collaborative workgroups? What is actually said and done and what patterns emerge during a creative breakthrough?
3. **What was the research design?** A case study was presented of a 4-month creative collaboration between members of a design consultancy and a senior university design class tasked with designing 21st century communication products for a well-known greeting-card company client. The research design utilized a social constructionist communication theory, the coordinated management of meaning, (CMM).

Creative breakthrough moments were identified in three different interactions from questionnaires and videotaped data based on 5 criteria for breakthroughs identified from four literatures. Reflective interviews of all the participants also enabled insight into the creative breakthrough moments and the narrative process that developed new meaning. The videotaped conversational patterns that produced those creative breakthrough moments were then recursively examined and analyzed with conversational analysis, CMM research methodology, and figurative language.

4. **What were the key findings?** Six specific conversational conditions were present in creative breakthrough emergence. A reflexive pattern of critique, relationship, responsibility, idea generation, and reframing authorship enabled participants to co-evolve design narratives that made new meaning. As depicted in the Creative Collaborative Conversational Model, when a group is focused on creating something innovative, new, and useful, these six specific conversational conditions function as an improvisational language structure that facilitates their intention to generate and propose something new and useful. Critique can be utilized as a creative springboard for innovation and the taking of fresh perspectives. This was a surprise. People do not have to have nonjudgmental conditions, brainstorming, and individuals building on input for creativity. Relational responsibility moves participants made with each other in addition to the critique made a difference.



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