

*“...it’s too  
easy to say  
‘no’ all  
the time.”*

p.14

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LORRAINE TWOHILL

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# The Curious Case of Creativity

Good ideas sell products. Great ideas change lives. From opening up our brand to opening up museums, we see creativity as a way to solve problems – large and small. Lorraine Twohill, Google VP of Global Marketing, explains how.

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**E**ngineers see the world differently. While most of us accept what we see or adapt to our environments, an engineer wonders ‘*Why?*’ Why are things the way they are? Why can’t we change them? This passion for solving problems drives a lot of our creative thinking at Google. We aspire to be a company that tackles issues that affect billions of people, whether they’re small, everyday concerns or huge, global-scale problems.

Curiosity and creativity are never far apart. You need to be curious to identify problems worth solving, and then come up with new solutions. We try to foster this in the Google culture. Our teams are full of curious, energetic, passionate people from diverse backgrounds, and they have unconventional

approaches to work, play, and life. Our atmosphere may be casual, but as new ideas emerge – at lunch, on campus, in the gym – they are traded, tested, and put into practice with dizzying speed. Often these ideas become launch pads for new projects destined for worldwide use.

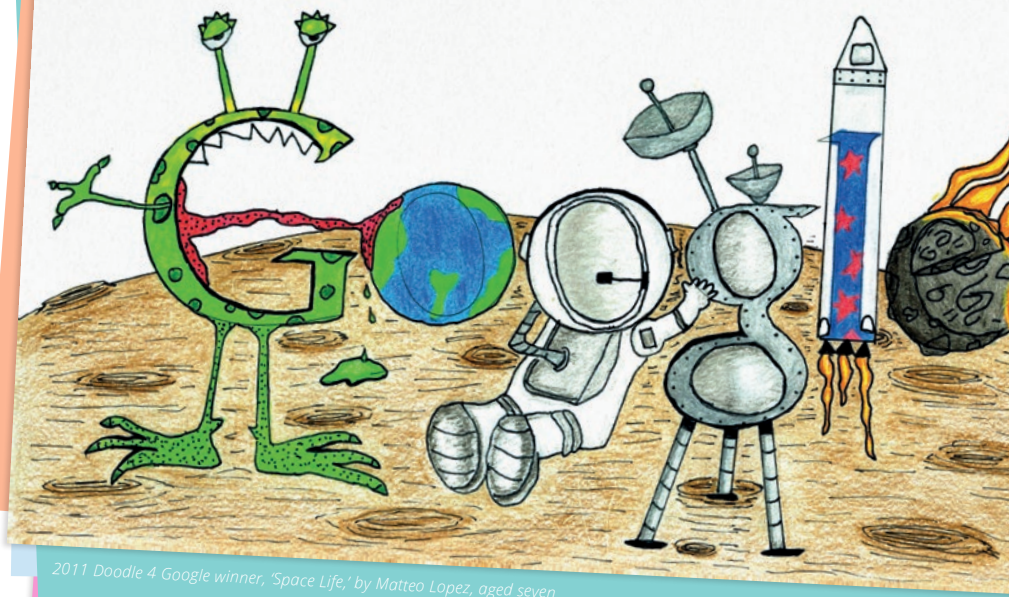
We don’t just solve problems with our software, but also with our marketing. Ultimately, we want to help people understand how technology can enhance their lives, letting them spend time doing more important things than reading a manual. To do that, we remind ourselves to constantly ask ‘why’ and keep a few rules of thumb in mind: Focus on one real person, be open, say yes, and have a purpose.

In a world where everything we do is counted in the billions (clicks, visits, users), it’s easy to think ➡

solely in terms of numbers and digits. That's why we try to focus on one real person. That real person could be your mom, your brother, or your friend. Boiling technology down to a simple message focusing on real benefits that matter to people can make a product personal. It shows people how technology connects to and enhances their daily lives. It's not always easy; people are more complex than machines, after all. We certainly don't get it right every time, but our best creative work carries a simple yet meaningful message. Our 'Dear Sophie' ad for Chrome shows how one person – a new dad – can use the web to share memories with his daughter as she grows up.

We embrace creativity all around us. Ideas can come from anyone, not just a 'Creative' department. We open-source ideas internally, and we also collaborate with many content creators, artists, developers, brands, agencies, and people who come to us with wonderful ideas. They stretch and inspire us. Collaboration is essential to problem-solving in our increasingly complex world. That is why we believe so strongly in the power of open technologies and platforms. They enable anyone, anywhere, to apply their unique skills, perspectives, and passions to the creation of new products and features on top of our platforms.

One of our initiatives, 'Chrome Experiments,' encourages interesting uses of HTML5 on our Chrome browser. Perhaps the most well-known experiment to come out of this is *The Wilderness Downtown*, an interactive multimedia video set to music from Arcade Fire. It was a collaboration between the band, our Data Arts team (see p.66) and writer/director Chris Milk (see p.26). The project wasn't about the technology. It was about how we could use technology to redefine the music video experience. Because let's face it, not a lot has changed since MTV



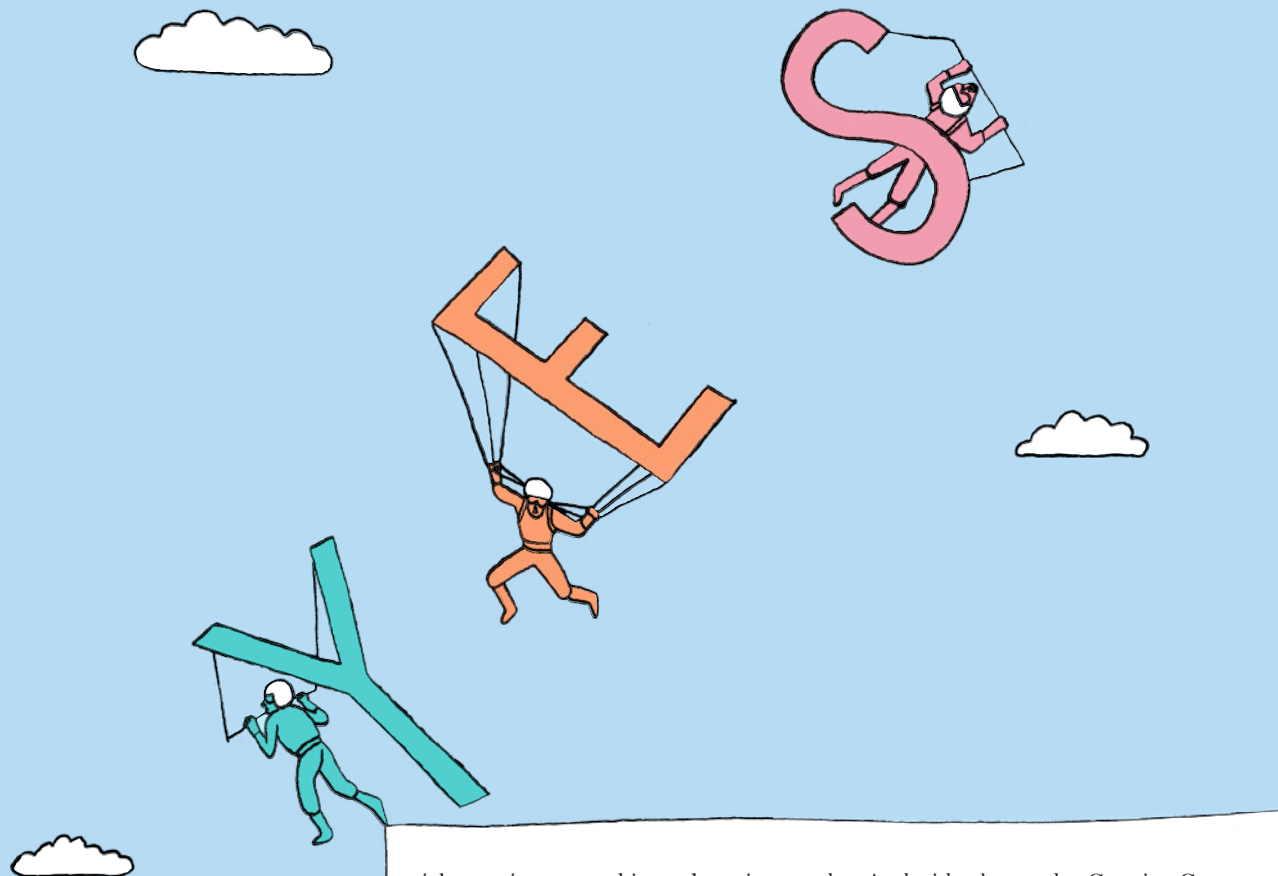
2011 Doodle 4 Google winner, 'Space Life,' by Matteo Lopez, aged seven

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debuted 'Video Killed the Radio Star' almost 30 years ago.

There are plenty more examples, for which we can take very little credit. Through Google+, artists like will.i.am from the Black Eyed Peas, and singer-songwriter Daria Musk, are re-imagining what a live concert can be. Sal Khan is using the YouTube platform to revolutionize a system of education that has barely changed in two centuries. In 2006, the former hedge fund analyst began remotely tutoring family members, posting video lessons for them to watch in their own time, at their own pace. Since then, his 'Khan Academy' has grown into an online collection of over 2,800 educational videos with over 118 million views. They are fun, clever, and incredibly creative. For Khan, they all started as a solution to a problem: How can I schedule tutoring sessions around work, soccer practice, and different time zones?

Creativity can also be a decision you make. And the truth is, it's too easy to say 'no' all the time. It's too easy to be cautious. Pushing the boundaries of creativity means saying 'yes,' taking



risks, trying new things, learning, and being surprised. So we don't just open-source ideas at Google, we open-source our brand.

Every day, illustrators and engineers create beautiful interpretations of our logo, and we display these 'Doodles' on our homepage. For a number of years, one of my favorite marketing programs has been Doodle 4 Google. It is a competition that asks students to design a Doodle around a theme such as 'Our Community' or 'My Future.' No one is more creative than kids, and this contest drives that home for me every year. By inviting users of all ages to share their imagination, we ultimately share ownership of our brand.

It wasn't a coincidence that we released the beta version of Gmail, offering one GB of free storage, on April Fool's Day, 2004. That much storage is normal now, but at the time no one else came close, so people thought we were joking. When they realized we weren't, it was a delightful surprise and also a huge story. We didn't do it with a flashy ad, we did it with a decision. Similarly, we chose to license the little green

Android robot under Creative Commons, meaning anyone can do whatever they want with it. This has helped the immense success of Android and has also fostered an incredible momentum of creative energy all over the world.

Creativity is most powerful when it has a purpose. Through projects at Google, we have opened up the world's best museums (Art Project), helped kids develop a love of science (Google Science Fair and YouTube Space Lab), showed how much we all have in common (*Life in a Day*), and brought small businesses onto the web (Getting America's Businesses Online). We have a strong sense of why we exist and why we do what we do. We believe that our legacy – as a company and as individuals – should be to make a difference in the world around us.

Whether helping a small business owner, a new dad, or a kid who wants to learn more, it's a healthy disregard for the impossible that compels us to find creative solutions to all sorts of problems.

So next time, ask an engineer what he or she would do. Or better yet, hire one 🍷

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