COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY

In 12 Proven Steps

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1. Brainstorm

Use the four rules of improv: No matter what your teammate tosses at you, always say, "Yes (and)…". Make the other person look good. Keep things simple. Keep things active.

2. Expand ideas.

When the sudden leaps of creative genius occur, they're drawing on the many layers of input the group has established.

3. Align ideas.

Themes will emerge and prevail. Now is the time to group and narrow the elements. Take the ideas that remain and find the logic beneath them. Why is there a pirate ghost in the attic?

Recommended reading:

Collaborative Creativity: A Complex Systems Model with Distributed Affect by Cecilia R. Aragon and Alison Williams

4. Evaluate risk.

How much money should be invested? How comfortable is each member with required technology? How comfortable are they with edgy/risky material? How far off their personal brand are they willing to go? What is the level of priority they place on the project considering their other work?

5. Outline the project.

Where are the books set? Time period? Who are the characters? What are the underlying themes to be worked out? What are the conflicts across the series and in each book?

6. Who does what?

People may self-select according to their strengths. Another way to find strengths in the group is to ask: What is your aptitude for learning? Areas of weakness can be tackled as a group (marketing).

7. Assign deadlines.

Commitment and keeping promises are key. Draw up and sign a contract. Agree on milestones, check-ins, due dates, and … have a fallback plan if disaster strikes. Know your pace of creation and the project's end point (release date, related holiday).

8. Review.

Commitment and communication are key. Have regular reviews of work done, work pending, work to come, checking in via phone, email, or Skype. Respect each other's time, abilities, and especially emotions. The dark side of commitment is becoming attached to our work, making us unable to revise or change it.

9. Remember your health.

Don't neglect your wellbeing in favor of the project.

Tools:
- Story Bible
- Year-at-a-Glance Calendar
- Reliable Communication Method

10. Complete.

When the majority is satisfied with their work, it's done. The sum really is greater than its individual parts.

11. Pay the bills.

Decide who will pay for what and how to reimburse expenses (such as website hosting, advertising). Divide profits or put profits back into the project? Keep a single spreadsheet accessible by all to track everything.

12. Let's do it again!

With the success of one project, you may want to do another. Allow some breathing space. Then do a postmortem—what worked? What didn't? What can we do better?

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