

DePaul Learning Conference 2014

Presentation by Ken Krimstein, College of Communication

Before we get started I'd like you to think about a paper, a project, a headline, a concept, a lecture, an idea that's frustrating you. That's blocking you.

Now, I'd like you to
write it down, in just a
couple of words, and
put it to the side.



This talk is a boiled
down and sped up
version of a course I
sometimes teach – an
innovation workshop.

But it's also about a way to open up and engage the classroom to do something that is very very hard for most people.

Heck, it's even hard for
people who do this
dangerous act
professionally.

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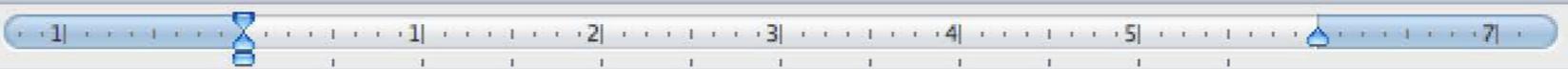
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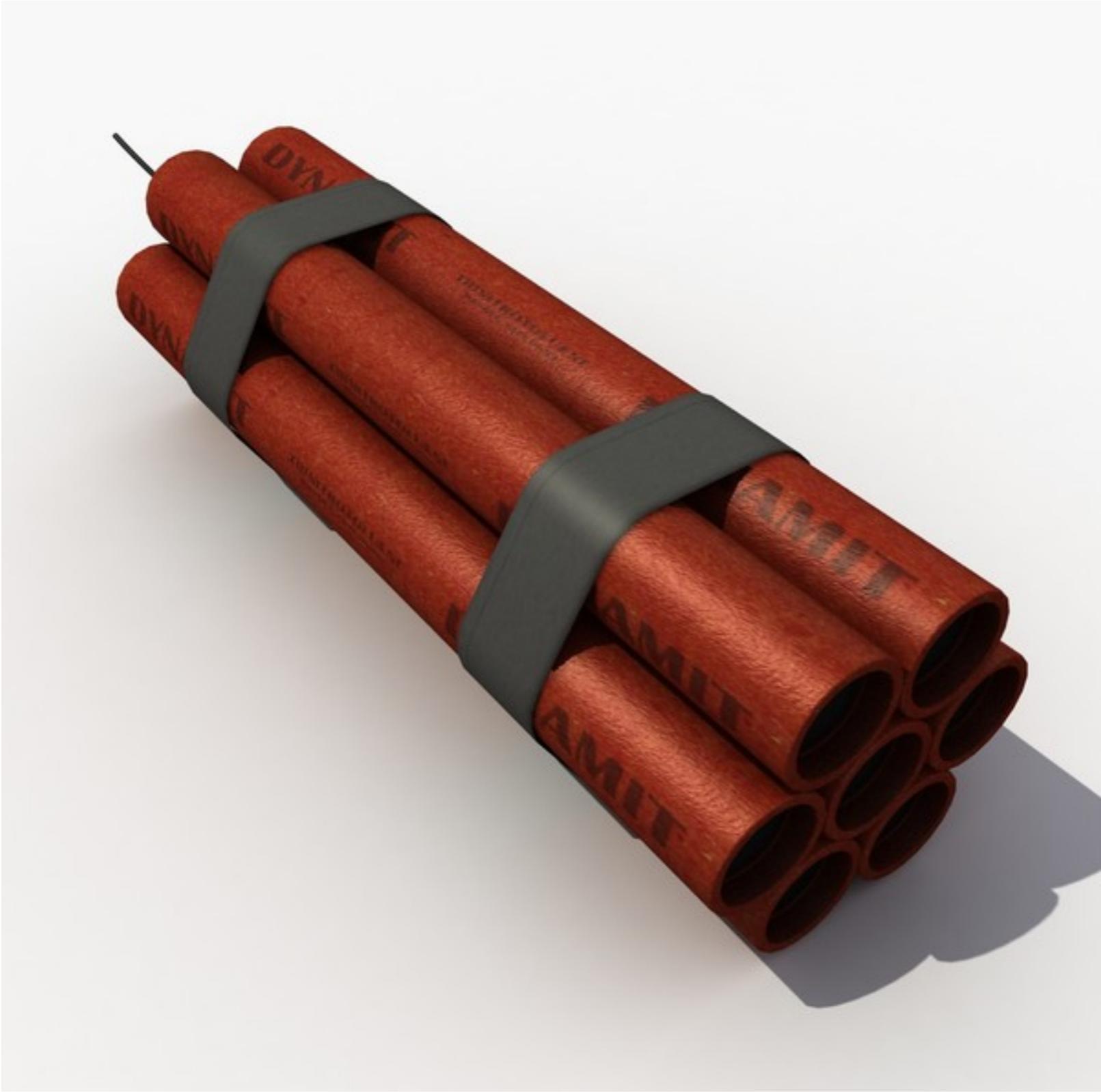
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What you'd like to do.

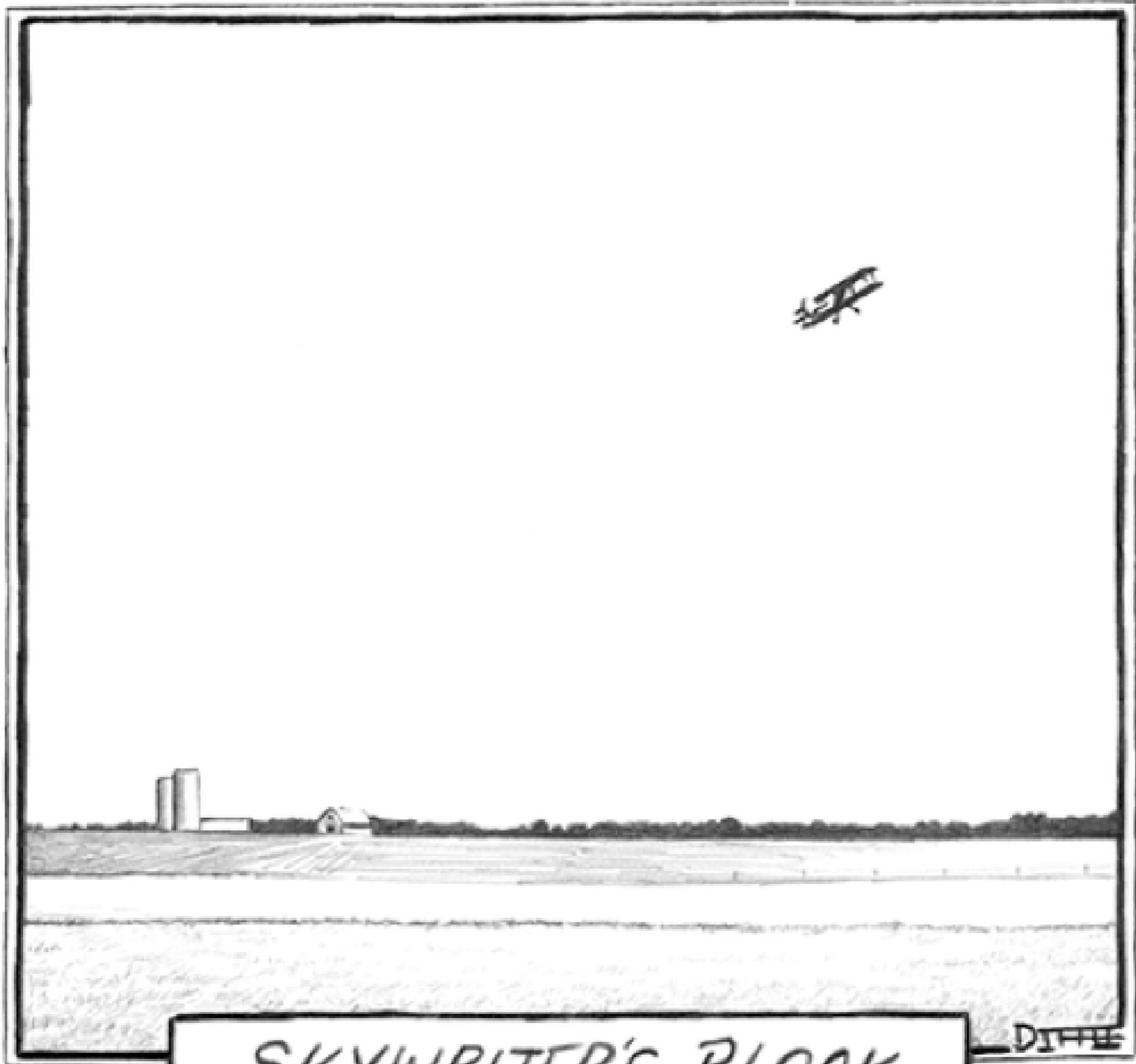


...but wait there is
another way...



...nope.

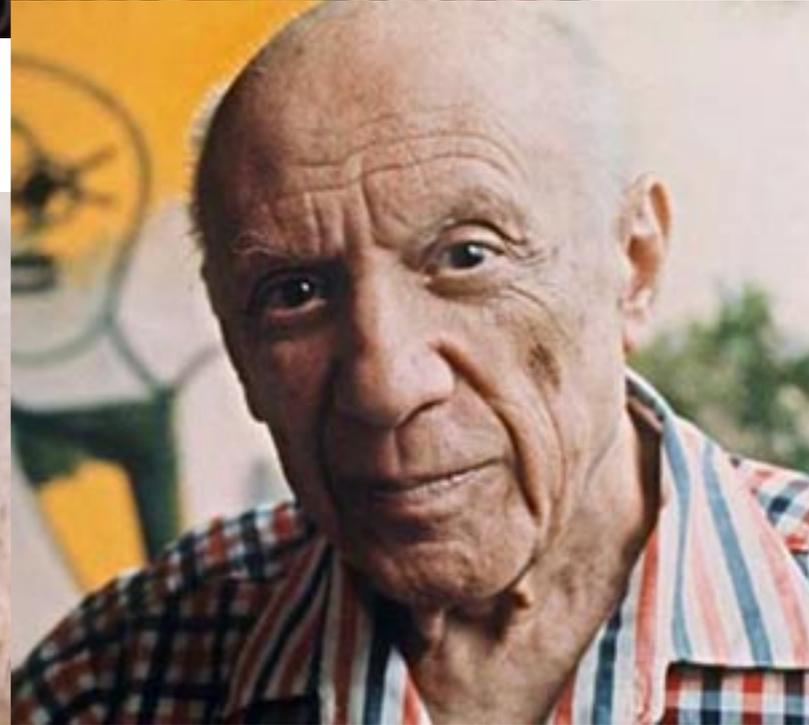
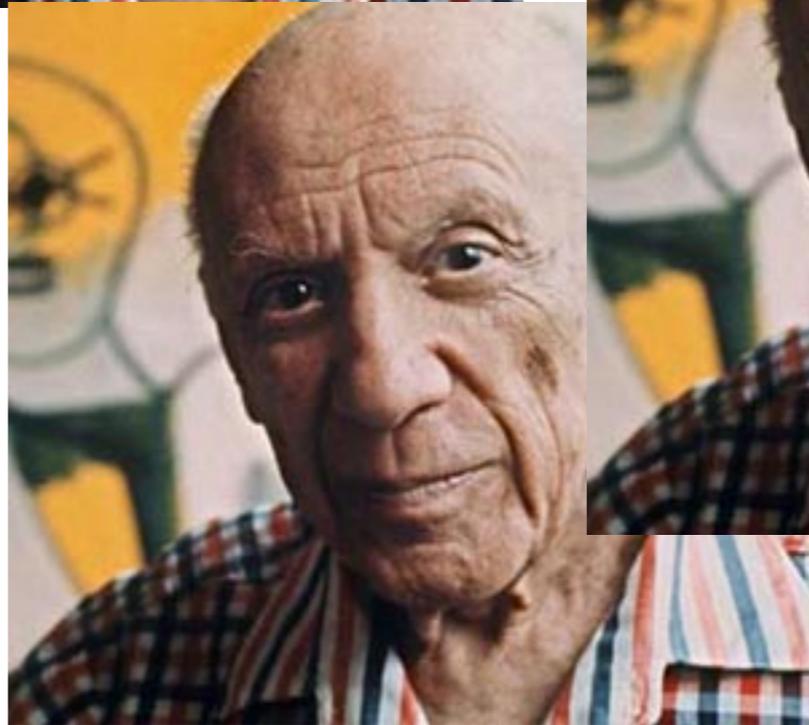
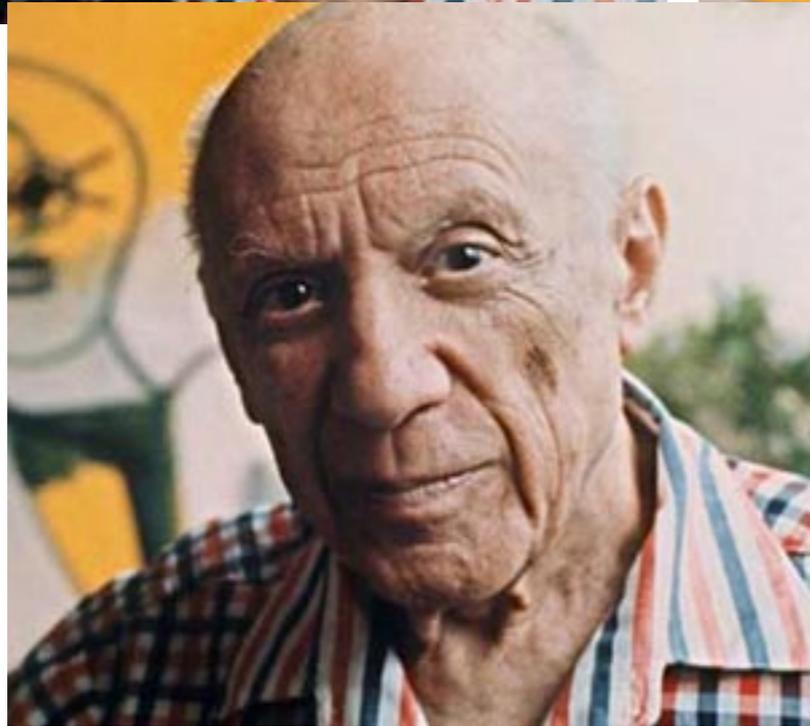
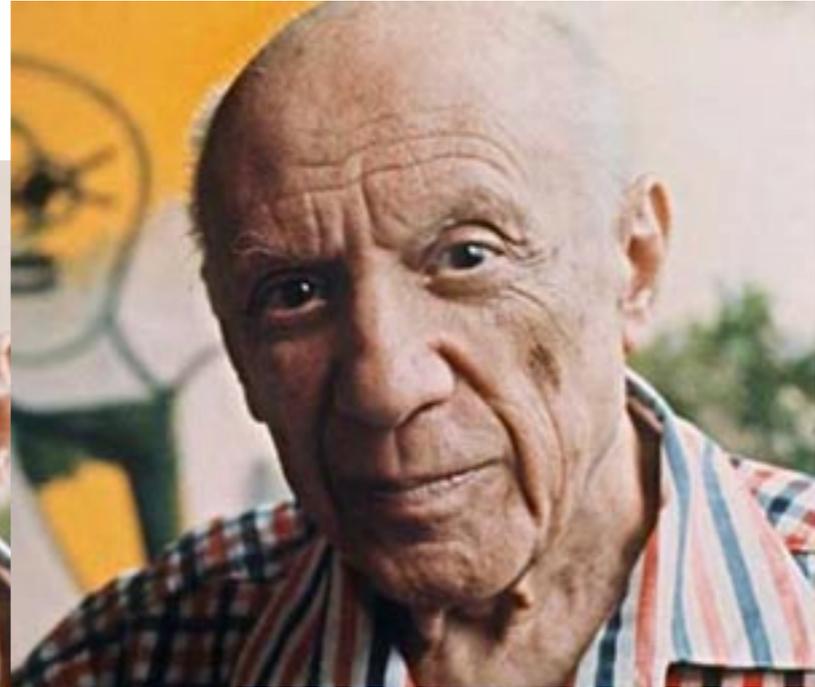
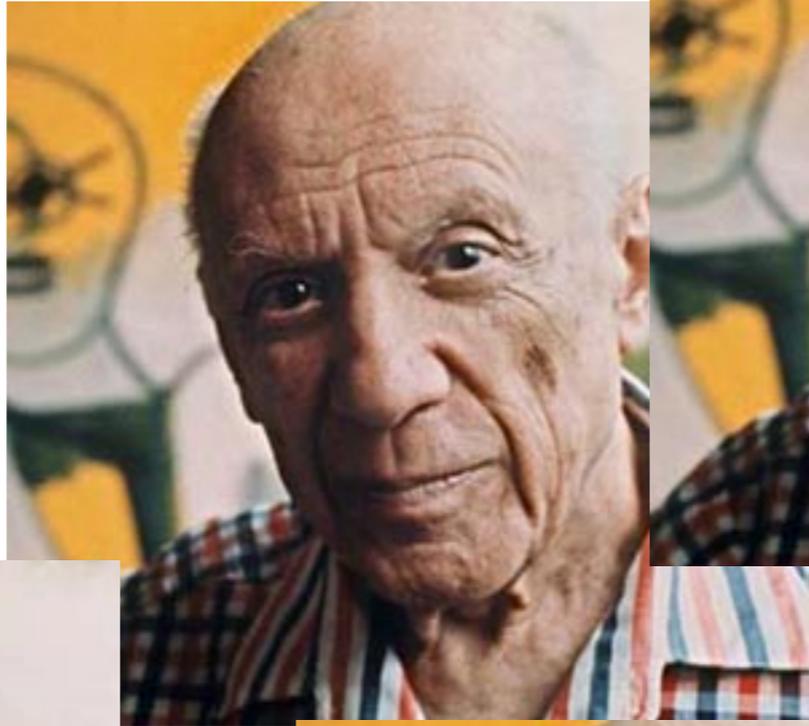
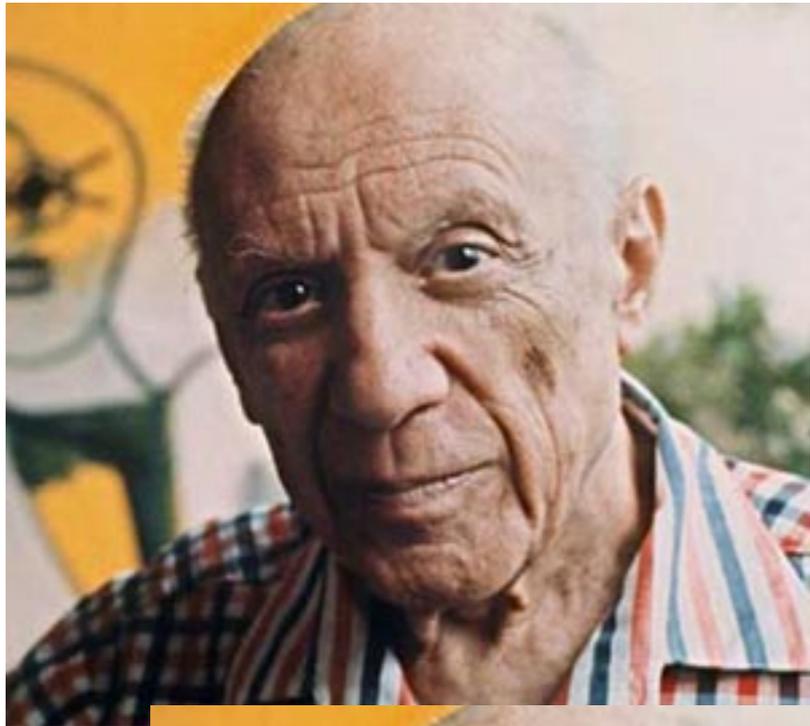
You can take up another career. Like, say, a skywriter...



SKYWRITER'S BLOCK

DITTE

The good news.



We are all Picassos...

If you're alive, your
DNA is closer to
Picasso's than it is to
any other creature. We
are programmed to
create.

We've just got to find a
way to get out of our
own way.

So, what's a
writer/creative/designer/
innovator to do?

Play a child's game.

Really.



Rock
Paper
Scissors
Shoot

*It is a process. If you
go with it, you will
emerge on the other
side. With ideas.
Inspiration. And a
stomach that still has
some of its lining left.*

*This is the foundation
of an entire course I
teach, an ideation
workshop focused on
advertising/marketing
and that I've adapted
to creative writing
(fiction and non-fiction)*

But since we have
limited time today, I'll
just give you a little
taste of the “game.”

So let's begin...you sit
down at the computer
to write and...



Meet the Rock

It is impossible. Can't
be done. It is a rock. I
am blocked. Forget
about it.

The key here is acknowledging that you have an enormous boulder in front of you. One the size of your house. Yes, the task of writing the next “Catcher In The Rye” or “Just do it” is impossible.

Well, there are several things you can do with the Rock:

Blow it up
Go around it
Go under it
(deflate it)
Fake it out
Drown the rock.
Flood the rock.
Mask the rock.

*Dig under the rock.
Make the rock invisible and walk
through it.
Grow wings and fly over it.
Turn the rock into cotton candy and
eat your way through it.*

*But how do you do this?
At a computer?*

The important thing here is you are dealing in the realm of imagination so you can imagine yourself out of the box.

If you are writing a Haiku, write a sports report for the New York Post instead.

If you are writing a screenplay, write a sonnet.

*If the problem looks like Gibraltar, make yourself look like
David Copperfield, the magician, click your heels and
make the project a game.*

Here's an example. You want to write a book. No, you want to write the next Moby Dick. No, you want to write the next David Sedaris "Me Talk Pretty." Heck, let's go all the way, you want to be...

The New York Times

Book Review

JANUARY 20, 2013



JULIEN FAUGA © COLAGE2E.COM

'THE RIVER SWIMMER' | Page 10
Ron Carlson on Jim Harrison.

'MY BELOVED WORLD' | Page 11
Emily Bazelon on Sonia Sotomayor.

'FAREWELL, FRED VOODOO' | Page 13
Ben Fountain on Amy Wilentz.

Eyes Wide Shut

By Michael Kinsley

GOING CLEAR
Scientology, Hollywood, and the
Prison of Belief.
By Lawrence Wright.
Illustrated. 430 pp. Alfred A. Knopf. \$28.95.

That crunching sound you hear is Lawrence Wright bending over backward to be fair to Scientology. Every deceptive comparison with Mormonism and other religions is given a respectful hearing. Every ludicrous bit of church dogma is served up deadpan. This makes the book's indictment that much more powerful. Open almost any page at random. That tape of L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology's founder, that Wright quotes from? "It was a part of a lecture Hubbard gave in 1963, in which he talked about the between-lives period, when thetans are transported to Venus to have their memories erased." Oh, *that* period. Of course. How could I forget?

Continued on Page 16

On the front page of the New York Times Book Review.

Blow up that rock! Or, better yet, turn it into a giant rubber rock, take a run at it, and spring over it.

Or...

Here's

another tactic I sometimes use --

Do it completely wrong so the rock will try to discipline you and make you go to the principal's office and when the rock comes after you, dash around it to the other side.

Let's all try this way to
blow up the rock.

One of my favorites...



Take the scene/line
where you are blocked
and – kapow – turn it
into a Broadway
Musical!

Let's do it...

Get out the piece of paper from the beginning of the talk.

Get all Nathan Lane on it.

You have TWO WHOLE MINUTES!

...and???



*Make up your own ways to get around that pesky rock.
Think of Wile-E-Coyote.*

It may be scary. It may
be ugly. But it may
also be great. One
thing's for sure.

Bye Bye rock.

Now you're ready for
the next part of the
game.



Paper

*OK, here's where it gets interesting. Get some paper –
yes paper. And just start scribbling.*

Dirty a lot of paper. Don't think.
This fakes out the editor.
Annie Lamont's Vomit draft

Paper

Don't edit. Don't look. Do the overnight test.

...then

On your mark, get set...

Write a hundred titles for your work in five minutes.

Write a hundred last sentences in five minutes.

Draw 20 scenes that you would never never never put in your story. (Especially if you CAN'T draw!)

Take your main character's name and write twenty different names for him/her/it that rhyme.

Start writing your story backwards!

Make a clip file of 30 images that would be great for the cover/poster.

Make a clip file of 30 images that would be completely wrong.

Take your main character, write a paragraph in his or her voice about he or she feels about Comet Cleanser. Yes.

Make it so true and personal you can't believe it – like you're a combination of Freud and a priest/confessor.

Don't stop writing for 10 minutes at least.

Go back to the paragraph – circle words you think are cool, interesting, different. Maybe work that scene into your story/poem/screenplay and see what happens.

*None of this has to be seen.
It is all done behind closed doors, in the privacy of your
home, between consenting adults.*

*So get some paper – the cheaper the better – and pencil
with eraser and go.*

The wastepaper
basket is the writer's
best friend.

Use pencil on paper!

Now you're ready for
the next step...



FISKARS®

Scissors

The mash-up
Combine/inspire
Forces your whacko mind
Make bad combinations

*All the kids are doing it. It's the power of "the mash up."
By slamming unconnected ideas together, amazingly,
wondrously, a new beast emerges. Often a better
fresher beast. Often nonsense. But you'll feel it when
you know it and you'll know it when you feel it.*

*This actually requires
scissors, old
magazines, and tape.*

Go through a pile of old magazines and newspapers and clip 30 to 40 pictures you think are “cool,” for whatever reason.

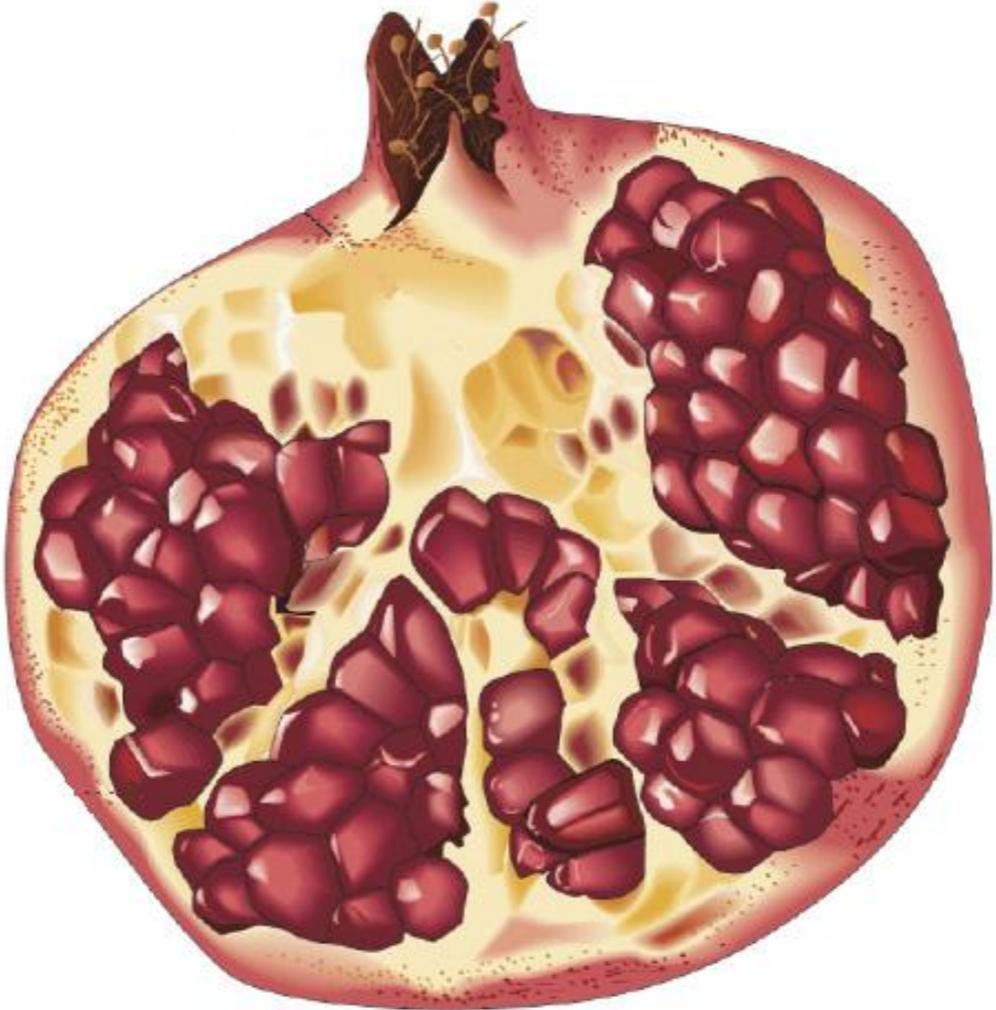
Put them in a pile and forget about them.

Take the last setting or scene you were stumped on. Now, grab a picture that describes the scene for you. Something that catches its vibe. (It could be someone falling asleep...) Then, cut out some other pictures that would take it and make it great. Weird. Horrible. Solve the problem with pictures you've clipped.

Alternatively. Take one of the pictures you've found for the cover and then grab some random pictures you've clipped from your files and mash them up in threes.

Look at any combinations you like and go to the place you got stumped or stopped in your writing and pick up from there working in the picture.

Or try this...

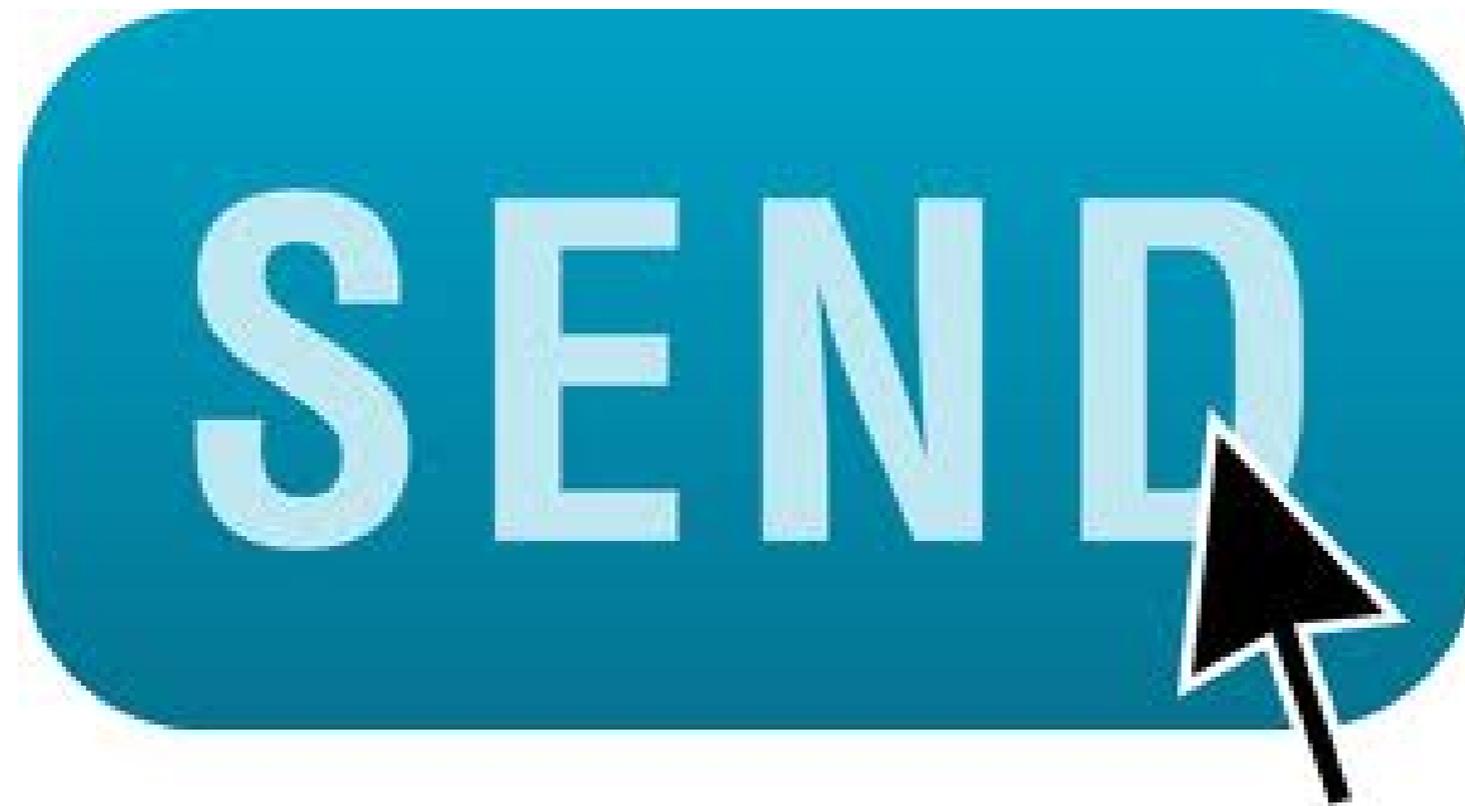


Work the word
pomegranate into your
next sentence...

It will be weird. But it will suggest new directions. New angles. New...ideas. And you're off and running. And remember, there's always the magic of the "save as" command.

And finally...

The shoot...



Shoot

Put it out there

It ain't creative unless it sells

Get it up, get it on its feet, get it out the door

Google

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

All of this is for naught unless you actually get your baby up, get it on its feet, and send it out the door. Send your ideas out there. Sure, you could try for Knopf or the New Yorker off the bat, but you would be just as well to get it on a small press website or even your own blog. The important thing is, FINISH IT AND GET IT OUT. Then you can start it over or even better, make another one. Just keep writing the kinds of things you want to read – as a teacher once said to me, ideas are like balloons – let one free and more will come in its place.

make mistakes

being right keeps you in place,

being wrong forces you to explore

switch and steal

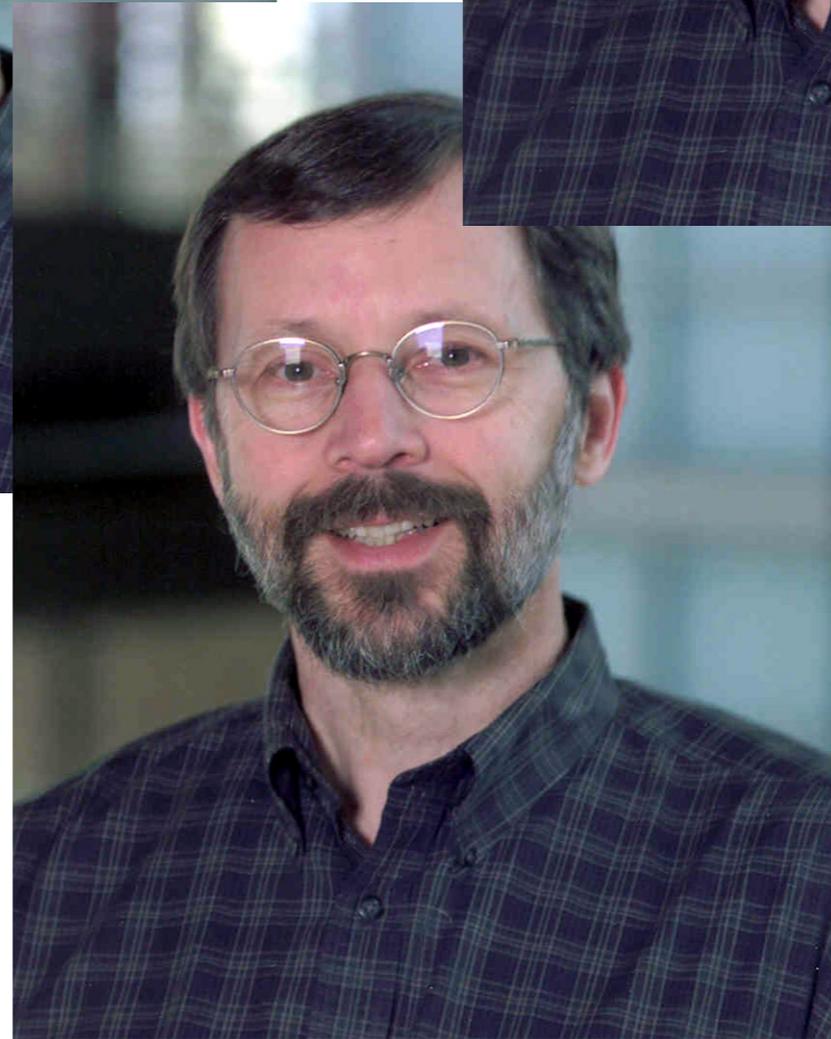
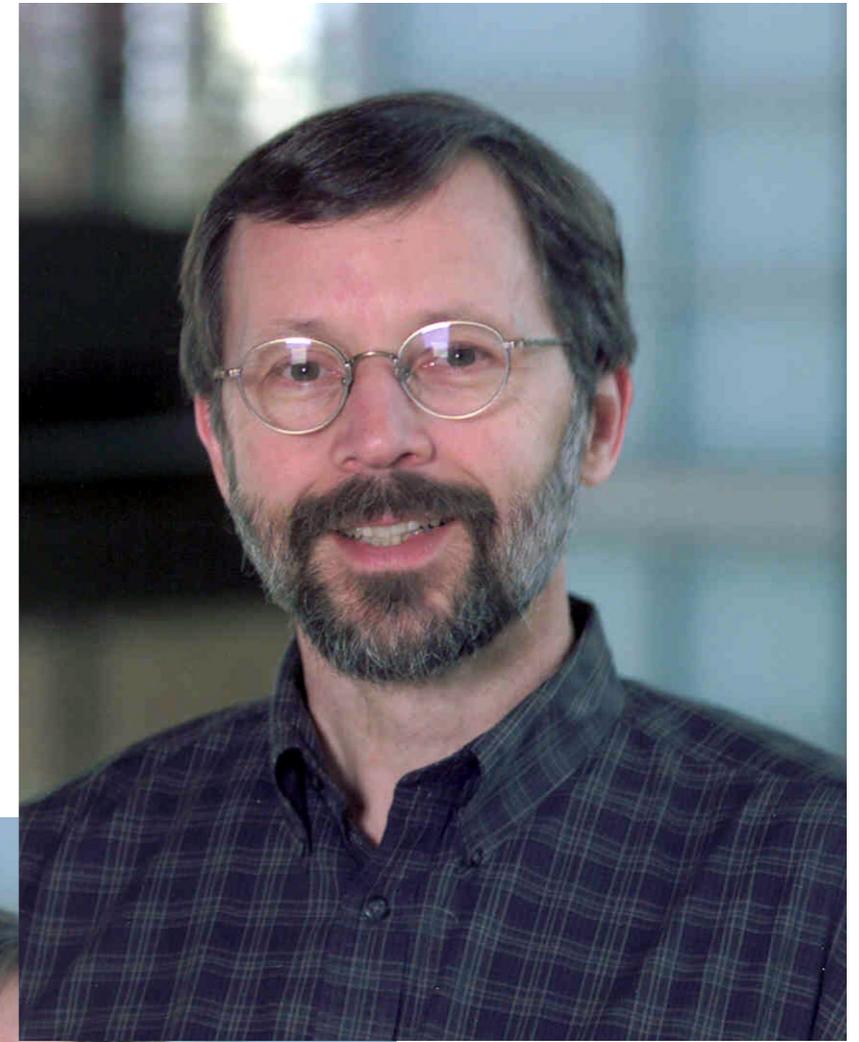
DO

IT

WRONG

“Fail better.”

Samuel Beckett



Ed Catmull

Head of Pixar – Fourteen #1 hits in a row from Toy Story
to Frozen

“Pixar films are not good at first, and our job is to make them so, to go, as I say, “from suck to not-suck.”

oblique strategies

http://music.hyperreal.org/artists/brian_eno/oblique/oblique.html



Apply. Rinse. Repeat.

