

7 tips to help you understand the creative class



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Back in 2002, my husband, Professor Richard Florida, published the international best-seller *The Rise of the Creative Class*, an analysis of the forces that are reshaping our economy, our geography, the work we do, and our whole way of life. In it, he argued that just as our economy shifted from an agricultural basis to an industrial one in the late eighteenth century, we were entering a new epoch in which the most significant driver of economic growth is human creativity.



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Leading this transformation are the 42 million Americans – over a third of our national workforce, and more than 150 million worldwide – who use their minds and their creativity to earn their livelihoods: the creative class. The “super-creative core” of the creative class includes scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, architects, and designers, as well as society’s thought leadership—magazine and book publishers and editors, journalists, think-tank intellectuals, and so on.


These are the people who produce new designs, forms, and models or that are readily transferable and widely useful. The creative class also includes creative professionals, people who work in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries, such as high-tech, financial services, law and medicine, and business management—people who use their minds and creativity to solve problems and develop new and better systems.

Though the members of the creative class do not share one singular identity, they share a number of attributes—perhaps most importantly an ethos that is tolerant and open-minded and places a high value on individuality, authenticity, merit, and originality.

To market to them effectively, you need to understand seven things about them:

- 1. They are economically secure and resilient** – with a median household income of \$130,000, they collect half of all wages paid in the US and account for 70% of discretionary spending.
- 2. They live in great metros.** Though members of the creative class do live in rural areas (17%) and small cities (21%), they are mostly concentrated in the downtowns and inner-ring suburbs of big, diverse cities, as well as tech hubs, and college towns. In some neighborhoods in New York, Singapore, London, San Francisco, LA, Amsterdam, Berlin, and Sydney, they make up more than half of the population. At the same time, creative class members crave access to the outdoors. If they can afford it, they like to live along coastlines, near parks, or where there are mountain views.
- 3. They are demographically diverse.** 52% of creative class members are women, and 35% are minorities. In the San Jose metro, in the heart of Silicon Valley, 40 percent of creative class members are Asian. Half of Silicon Valley startups have at least one foreign-born founder. Creative class communities are diverse themselves and highly tolerant; neighbourhoods with high creative class concentrations will almost always have high concentrations of gays, immigrants, and people who work in “Bohemian” professions like music, theatre, and dance.
- 4. They are highly intelligent.** Perhaps surprisingly, nearly 40% of creative class members do not hold college degrees (among them Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and the late Steve Jobs). At the same time, more than three-quarters of adults with college degrees (72.2%) belong to the creative class.
- 5. They see themselves as progressives and change agents.** Members of the creative class have well-developed social consciences. They value sustainability and fine design and are turned off by vulgar consumerism. They are drawn to mission-driven organisations that care about their global footprints.
- 6. They are risk-takers.** Creative class members are unconstrained by typical 9-to-5 jobs; they are constantly on the go, but they work when and where they please. They identify with their fields and their creative interests rather than their employers; they change jobs and locations frequently.
- 7. They value authenticity and are drawn to experiences.** Creative class consumers are turned-off by the prepackaged and generic; they are hungry for products, services, entertainment options, and experiences that are one-of-a-kind. A creative class consumer is more likely to book a room in an eco-lodge in a jungle in an obscure corner of the developing world than a suite on a luxury cruise ship; they are as eager to taste home-cooked food in exotic places as they are to go to five-star restaurants. It's not enough to think “out-of-the-box” if you want to appeal to creatives; you must think “outside-the-universe.”

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As Chief Executive Officer of the Creative Class Group, Rana Florida manages new business development, marketing, consulting, research and global operations serving such diverse clients as BMW, Converse, IBM, Cirque du Soleil, Audi, Zappos, and Starwood Hotels - to name just a few.

