



# Netwatch By Jim Carroll

*Your guide to business & accounting on the Internet*

## Surf out of the box

**W**hen I started my career with a large accounting firm in 1979, I quickly realized I might be different from everyone else. That epiphany occurred when I was advised the little stick men I was using for audit file tick marks weren't really appropriate. (I had devised a

system of stances and faces, each signifying something different.) Over the years, I've come to realize that part of the fuel that fires my passion for work is my intense curiosity. I've also come to realize that thinking differently has become critical to my success.

So it is with you; in a time in which business models, markets, customers, industries and clients are changing

at an evermore furious pace, thinking differently about the world around you is a powerful trait to possess. You also need to ensure you provide for a culture of creativity within your organization so it can evolve at a pace that the future demands of it.

That's why I suggest you instill a culture of personal and corporate

creativity by following my Five Cs of Creativity — provide for curiosity, collaboration, change and courage and create excitement every day. Creative organizations want their people to be curious and look for trends, signs of change and opportunities everywhere. They establish a collaborative culture in which information sharing is expressly encouraged. They also know that success comes from embracing change, not shying away from it. And change requires courage, because it involves risk. Finally, creative companies create excitement every day. I have read countless surveys that indicate employees are bored by their work. That's not the way to provide for creativity. By doing things differently, you can instill passion and purpose in even the most routine jobs.

One way of providing for a creative mindset is to use the Internet as a window into the soul of creative people. I regularly take time to seek out unique websites created by people I know are quite different from me. I

read their observations on the world to ensure I don't let my own stereotypes and biases deflect my thinking from important trends and issues.

One of the sites that I visit regularly is Boing Boing, a weblog run by author Cory

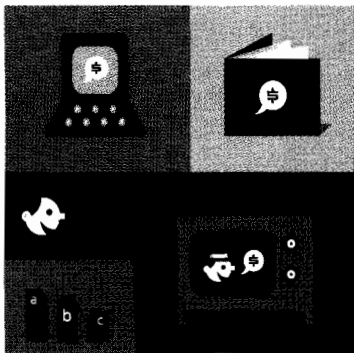
Doctorow. It serves up a daily mix of fascinating postings that might seem to have little to do with anything important. But over the years these off-the-wall posts have given me insight into many things, including young people's attitudes on work/life balance, the longevity of careers and the need for constant stimulation in the workplace.

I also check out the We Make Money Not Art site regularly, because it provides a stream of postings about new technologies, social trends and other matters. Then there is The Register, which offers up quirky, not-quite-mainstream news from the world of technology.

On such sites there is often a unique form of online chatter that appears long before new trends and issues go mainstream. By spending time in these sites I became aware of emerging security, virus and hacking challenges long before they began to broadly impact computer users and organizations. Last year, there was intense discussion of the challenges with electronic voting machines, which became a big issue in the last US presidential election.

The point is, surfing the Web without purpose or a goal is not a pointless exercise. It is a critically important thing to do to spur your own creative thinking, a much needed skill in this world of constant change.

*Jim Carroll, FCA, is a well-known speaker, author and columnist. Reach him at [jcarroll@jimcarroll.com](mailto:jcarroll@jimcarroll.com) or log on to his website at [www.jimcarroll.com](http://www.jimcarroll.com)*



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