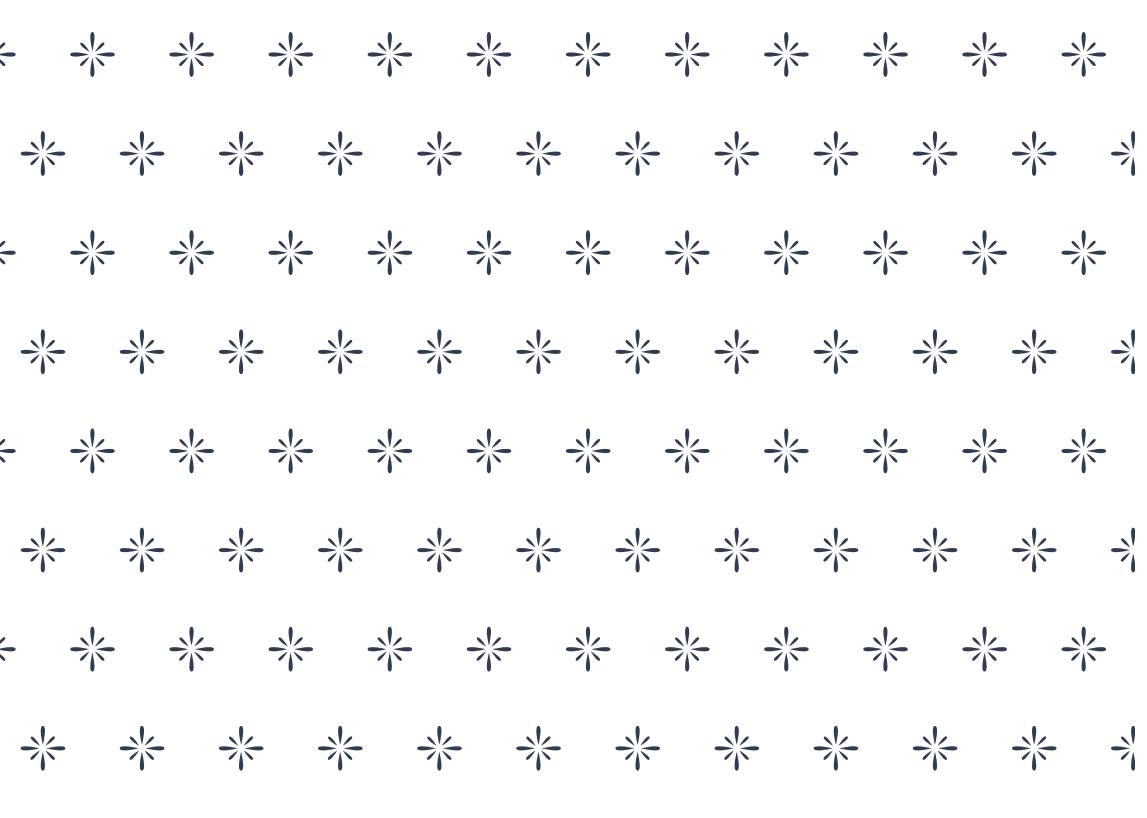
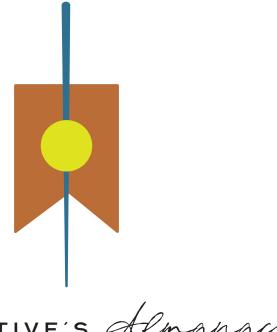
THE CREATIVE'S

ALMANAC

ENGAGE YOUR BRAND VISION

The Inspired Foundry





THE CREATIVE'S Almanac

ENGAGE YOUR BRAND VISION

{step three in The Creative's Collection}

CREATED BY KARLA COLAHAN
THE INSPIRED FOUNDRY
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Many and heartfelt thanks to the following people for their inspiration and support: Joy Vetterlein, Anna Rachel Bolch, Esther Leaming (thank you for the copyediting!), Leah Jarvis, Kimberly Coyle, Kaitlyn Kessler, Laura Ferree, and Gavin Colahan.

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THE CREATIVE'S COLLECTION

a suite of brand-building resources for creative entrepreneurs



with a mid-year reflection ritual.

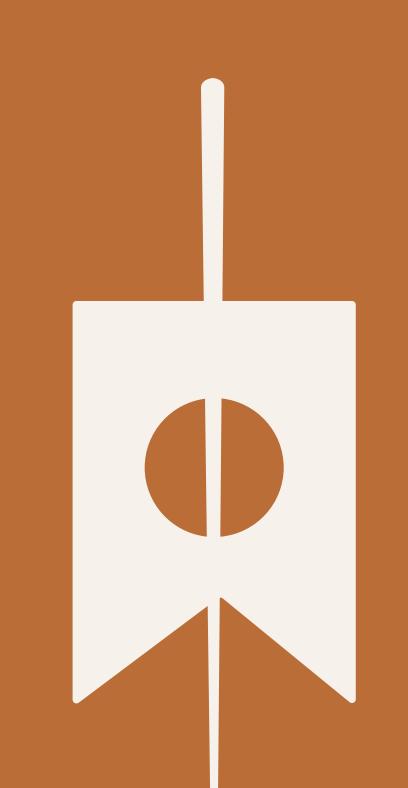


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welcome

Greetings and welcome to the fifth edition of The Creative's Almanac!

This is your new business bestie, your sidekick in all things dreaming and scheming, your co-gardener to planting the seeds that will produce a bountiful harvest in your creative buiness.

When you have a solid brand strategy (need one? check out The Creative's Compass) and a map of how you want your business to run (aka The Creative's Blueprint), the next step is implementing a flexible balance of dreaming and doing. This is the place to do both of those things.

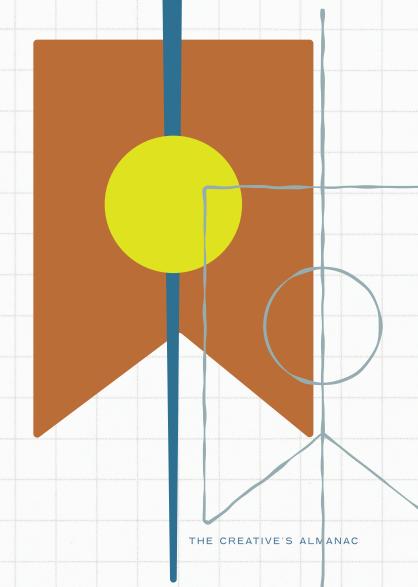
Much like a traditional almanac, this workbook focuses on the seasonal aspects of life but with a bent towards your creative work and a strategic planning framework that provides a 30,000-foot view of your life and business. This is all about engaging your brand vision. The goal is to provide a place for you to track your business systems, set goals and measure progress, and align your next steps with your future vision so you're set up for success in the long term.

My greatest desire is to give you a place to dream of wild, beautiful, and inspired ideas for your life and be a support along the day-to-day journey of making your dreams come true. Honestly, the world needs your dreams to become reality now more than ever. The time we're living in demands that each of us be fully ourselves, find our voices, and create impact, meaning, and purpose for the people we serve.

This workbook is one small way to help you achieve your dreams. It won't do the work for you, but it will help you figure out how to focus on the right things to take you one step closer to bringing those inspired ideas to life.

If that sounds good, let's rock and roll.





how to use the creative's almana

The Creative's Almanac is a workbook full of questions, activities, and prompts to help you engage your brand vision. The ultimate goal is to have a flexible plan for how you spend your day to day within our business. With that in mind, here are a few tips for moving through this brand-building workbook:

1. MAKE IT FUN!

CREATE A RITUAL AROUND ANNUAL PLANNING FOR YOUR BUSINESS. MAKE IT COZY OR COOL OR CALM, WHATEVER STRIKES YOUR FANCY.

2. KEEP THIS CLOSE BY.

YOU'LL WANT TO REFERENCE YOUR ANNUAL VISION, THE PEP TALK YOU'LL WRITE YOURSELF, AND THE GOALS YOU SET. KEEP THIS SOMEWHERE YOU WILL REMEMBER TO LOOK AT IT.

3. EYES ON THE PRIZE.

ANNUAL AND SEASONAL PLANNING IS A LONG GAME. KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE AND ENJOY THE JOURNEY ALONG THE WAY.

INVENTORY

Before we get started, let's lay the foundation. This workbook is divided into three parts: Reflection, Vision, and Action. Each part is integral for walking into a new year with a sense of purpose and focus. In order to accurately assess where your business is now and where you want it to go, we need to figure out what all is involved in your daily life as a creative entrepreneur.

If you completed The Creative's Blueprint, you've got a head start on your Inventory. If you're here for the first time, the following Inventory chart includes four broad categories to help assess the different areas of your life and creative business: Management, Brand, Creation, and Lifestyle. Each of these categories will be a part of the Reflection, Vision, and Action process moving forward.

Your Inventory should encompass all the different hats you wear as a business owner, so take a moment and consider each facet of what you do to keep your business alive and well. Consider everything from your backend tech systems to your client experience, your products and offerings, and everything in between. Write down everything you can think of so this Inventory becomes a detailed picture of how your business functions.

Additionally, for many of us, our personal life is heavily influenced by our work. Consider work-life *integration* instead of balance for the Lifestyle section as you flesh out your 30,000-foot view of your business.

A Field Notes box is included for brainstorming and other thoughts. You'll see Field Notes boxes throughout this workbook, an indication that there is room to brainstorm, journal, or take notes as needed.

Field Notes:



MANAGEMENT	BRAND	CREATION	LIFESTYLE



Deflection Here's where we look at the past, create a picture of the year, and decide what we bring into the next year and what we leave behind. Each portion is divided into the four categories from your Inventory, providing space to hold each item, turn it over in your mind, and reflect on its success over the last year. We'll begin with prompts for a quick look back at the past year and then move into a deeper year in review. The final section is all about the building blocks of your time: intentions, habits, and priorities. When we plan for the next year, we'll work on setting priorities first, deciding on the habits we'll need, and then setting intentions. Here at the start, we'll reverse the order to be honest with ourselves about what mattered most to us this year. Give yourself plenty of grace as you look back at what you went through.

HISTORY

Just for fun — fill in the blank with the first thing that pops in your head about your experiences from the past year.

FAVORITE MEAL OF THE YEAR // TOP 3 MOST PLAYED SONGS // BEST BOOK YOU READ / PODCAST YOU LISTENED TO / BLOG YOU DISCOVERED // FAVORITE TRAVEL DESTINATION // NEW FRIENDS MADE // BEST SATURDAY NIGHT // BIGGEST BELLY LAUGH // BEST NEFLIX BINGE // FIRST TIME FOR // FAVORITE MOVIE YOU SAW // FUNNIEST MOMENT AT WORK // EMBARRASSING THING THAT HAPPENED // FAVORITE SELF-CARE ACTIVITITY //

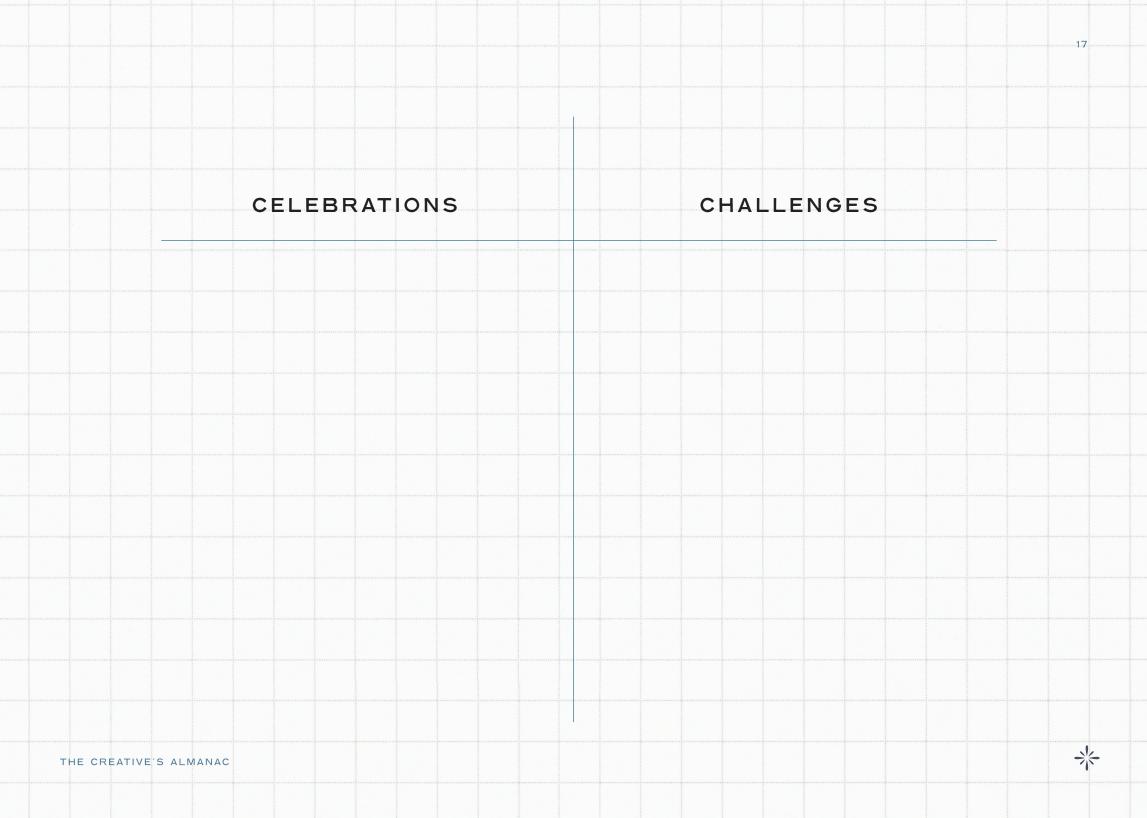
TIME YOU FELT MOST LIKE YOURSELF //
YEARLY MANTRA //
BEST TIME SPENT IN NATURE //
WORST DECISION YOU MADE //
BIGGEST LESSON LEARNED //
MOMENT OF KINDNESS FROM A STRANGER //
ORDINARY MOMENT THAT FELT EXTRAORDINARY //
FAVORITE PIECE OF MAIL RECEIVED //
FAVORITE PURCHASE //
MOMENT WHEN YOU SURPRISED YOURSELF //
NEW SKILL YOU LEARNED //
FELT MOST PROUD OF //
BEST MIC DROP MOMENT //
BEST GIFT YOU RECEIVED //
FELL IN LOVE WITH //

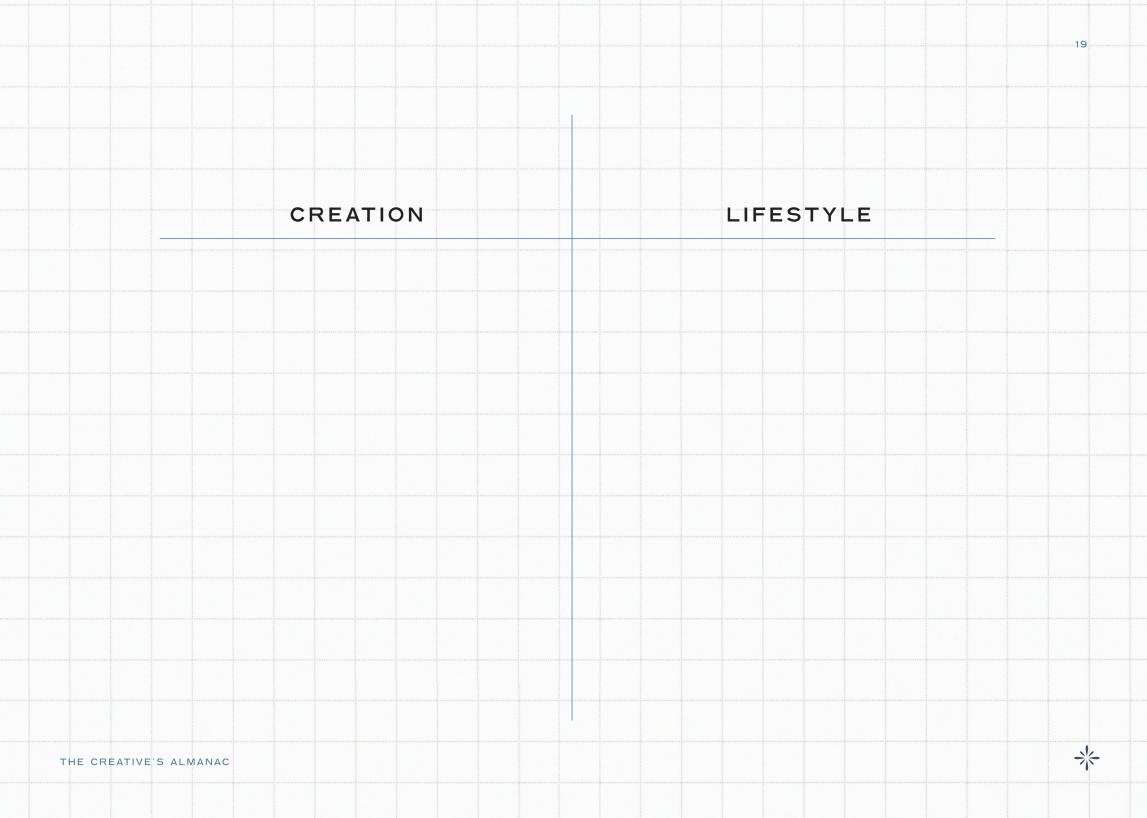
YEAR IN REVIEW

Think back on memories made, lessons learned, wisdom gained. What were your most favorite moments? What unforgettable experiences did you have doing what you love to do? When did you feel gratitude for your abilities and gifts? What went well? What was a challenge? Think broadly for the Accomplishments and Challenges sections and then dive deeper for each category of your Inventory.

Speaking of, grab your Inventory page — feel free to tear it out if you want! Use the following space to excavate your year, the good, the bad, and the ugly in your life and business.







OLD INTENTIONS

Did you make any New Year's Resolutions or set any goals for the past year? How did they serve you this year? Do you feel like you spent your time with those goals/intentions/resolutions in mind?

OLD HABITS

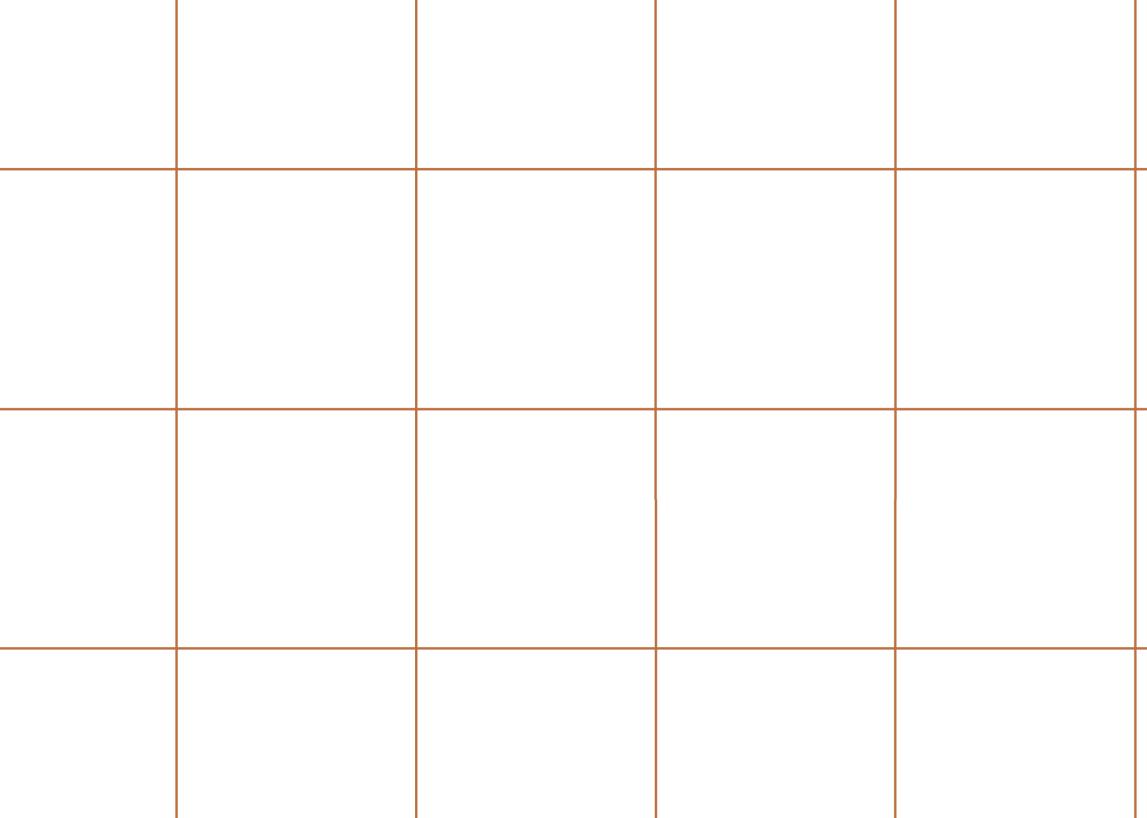
Your habits are the foundation of how you spend your time. Think about your goals for this past year and whether or not the habits you developed this year helped you achieve the kind of success you aimed for.



Field Notes:

OLD PRIORITIES

Look back over your favorite memories from the year — your accomplishments, challenges, intentions, and your habits. Based on your answers, what would you say your priorities were?



Arguably my favorite part of this workbook, Part Two is all about dreaming. We begin with a brand audit, a simple exercise to create a statement that encompasses the why of it all. This helps ensure that your dreams are built on a strong foundation. Then we'll look ten years down the road, followed by five years, and eventually focus on the upcoming 365 days, We'll end this part by creating new priorities, deciding on the habits we'll need to enforce those priorities, and setting intentions for the new year with a pep talk. After all that, you'll distill your vision down to one word to hold onto.			

BRAND AUDIT

Let's focus on your brand for a minute.

While there are virtually a thousand different books, people, courses, blogs, you-name-it that describe what a brand is and how it works, let's break it down into its simplest form to quickly asses where you're at.

Ultimately, your brand is the experience your customer or client has when they interact with you or your business. What moves them to take action with your work, whether they purchase from you, book you, or seek collaboration with you? What makes them care about your craft? The identity your brand takes on through your logo, color palette, packaging, etc. is a visual representation of this personality, but you can't get to the visual aspect of your brand without first understanding these questions of what, why, and who. That's our focus for this audit.

We want to know where your brand currently stands so your vision for the future of your business will come from the solid foundation of your why, which you can then use as fuel for your 10 year, 5 year, and 2022 visions for your business.

If you haven't already, this is where you're going to discern your Brand Why. It's the ultimate reason for doing what you do and will help guide the rest of your decision-making process for annual and seasonal planning.

Your Brand Why is a deceptively simple statement. Clocking in at only a few words, this statement is a declaration of your purpose for existing. It should feel universal, weighty even. It should feel like the truest expression of your desire for your work. I realize that's a lot to ask of a few words, but give it a whirl. See what comes up as you brainstorm within the Field Notes space.

Perhaps you already know your Brand Why and you feel comfortable with your foundation. If that's you, feel free to move ahead to the next section. If not, I'm hopeful you'll benefit from having a clear "why" for your business. Use the following questions and template to craft your statement. It might feel clunky straight from the template, so work it until it feels like you.

1. What are the core values of your business? These values will be an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to designing your future. Write them here:

2. Who are you serving in your business?

3. What message are you sending into the world with your work? What do you hope people take away from working with your business?

4. What's the driving force behind why you chose this work?



YOUR BRAND WHY

To			
	VERB	NOUN	

EXAMPLES

to create beauty
to simplify & thrive
to dignify creative work
to put hope on display
to shape & encourage creative vision
to make room

Fiel Notes

10 YEARS FROM NOW

You know your 'why.' You know who you're doing this work for, and what the purpose is behind your business. So now, let's take this to the next level and dream about how your Brand Why will inform the trajectory your craft.

What does your business look like in ten years? Think dream scenarios. Maybe even bigger than your dream scenarios. There are no right or wrong answers here, but challenge yourself to dream bigger than you've let yourself dream in the past.

Defining a ten-year-bigger-than-your-dream-scenario vision allows for greater clarity around what you want to be working towards. Business leaders call it the Big Hairy Audacious Goal, but we'll call it an *Inspired Idea*.

Your Inspired Idea is compelling. It's focused and measurable, and needs to feel just slightly out of reach. A little crazy, even. It should inspire you to work towards it with the understanding that even if you don't get there, working toward this kind of goal will still take you places and provide growth. It's also likely to change over time as you grow and change, so don't worry about being tied down to this one particular goal.

Just fill up the following page with as many audacious, wild ideas as you can. Use every square inch of this paper, or more if you need it, to brainstorm what amazing things could be possible for your business in ten years. Then, go back through your notes and circle the most compelling idea, the one that makes your heart leap out of your chest and your stomach twist with a healthy combination of excitement and fear. That's your Inspired Idea.

P.S. If you created an Inspired Idea in The Creative's Compass, you can use that here, explore what that idea might look like in ten years, or start from scratch. There's no limit on the amount of inspired ideas you can have.

TIPS

- 1. Write your 10 year vision "as-if." Instead of, "we could" or "I wish," write sentences in the present tense: I am, we are, we have, etc.
- 2. Include your personal vision as well. Work-life balance is a myth; think instead of work-life integration, and let who you want to be in ten years help guide your vision.
- 3. If you've never done any planning like this before, here are some questions to get you thinking:

WHERE DO YOU LIVE? WHO DO YOU COLLABORATE WITH? WHERE DO YOU TRAVEL FOR WORK? DO YOU HAVE A TEAM, STAFF, OR EMPLOYEES? WHO IS CALLING YOU FOR BOOKINGS/PERFORMANCES/APPEARANCES? WHERE IS YOUR WORK CURRENTLY SHOWCASED? WHAT PROJECTS ARE UP NEXT? WHAT DID YOU JUST FINISH WORKING ON? WHAT ARE YOU CELEBRATING? HOW HAS YOUR FAMILY GROWN? WHAT KINDS OF VACATIONS ARE YOU TAKING? WHERE DO YOU SHOP FOR CLOTHES NOW? WHAT KIND OF CAR DO YOU DRIVE? HOW MANY FOLLOWERS DO YOU HAVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA? IS OPRAH CALLING YOU FOR INTERVIEWS? WHAT KIND OF LIFESTYLE ARE YOU LIVING? HOW MUCH MONEY ARE YOU MAKING? HOW MUCH MONEY ARE YOU GIVING AWAY? WHAT PERSONAL DREAMS HAVE COME TRUE FOR YOU BECAUSE OF HOW WELL YOUR BUSINESS HAS DONE? WHAT DO YOU WITH ALL YOUR FREE TIME?



5 YEARS FROM NOW

How will you make it to your Inspired Idea?

Defining your ten-year goal leaves you with some decisions to make: What does the half-way point look like? Where can you take your business in the next five years to get to that Inspired Idea?

Your objective here is to work backwards from your Inspired Idea and decide what you need to do within the next five years to keep you on track towards your epic 10-year vision. Rewrite your Inspired Idea in the box and then use the space provided below to set up some targets to aim for in the next five years.

INSPIRED IDEA:						



GUT CHECK

Before we get too deep into making plans for the next year, let's do a quick check-in with your intuition.

Whether or not you listen to it, your gut knows what's up. That little voice is usually the first to respond when it's time to make a decision, asses a situation, or face a challenge. I bet you can think of times in the past year that you didn't listen and regretted it. Let's change that.

This page is a rapid fire exercise in exploring what you want, no ifs, ands, or buts. You might find some similarities in your answers for the prompts, but just go with it. Sometimes thinking about something as "More of This" instead of "Say Yes To" will open up new ideas. The second you start to overthink it is when you know your intuition is being drowned out by fear or limiting beliefs.

Keep in mind — you are allowed to say no to the things that don't push you closer to what you want. Time is valuable and there's only so much of it. You have full permission to ignore any guilt that comes up around 'saying no.'

SAY YES TO:

MORE OF THIS:

SAY NO TO:

LESS OF THIS:



NEW YEAR VISION

While it's helpful to have a long-term vision in mind to push you and keep you going in the direction you want to go, you don't have control over *the future*. You have the most control over what you do with the time right in front of you. So let's begin to think about the upcoming year and how you want to use that time.

Review what you wrote down in Part Two: Reflection and use those accomplishments and challenges from the past year as a starting point for what you want out of the new year for you and your business. Consider your Brand Why, your intuition's responses, and your 5 and 10-year visions as you work through the next few pages. Each page will take you through one category of your business, asking you to consider all aspects of that category in depth and how you can make progress or changes in the upcoming year. Then we'll create new priorities, habits, and intentions.



MANAGEMENT

THE NITTY GRITTY - YOUR FINANCIAL HEALTH, BOOKINGS, EXPENSES, PURCHASES; HOW YOU MANAGE YOUR INBOX, BILLING, ADMIN WORK; YOUR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE YOU WORK WITH, YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLES, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION; YOUR MARKETING STRATEGIES AND SYSTEMS, GROWTH, ENGAGEMENT, ANALYTICS. HOW DO YOU WANT THESE THINGS TO GROW OR CHANGE?

BRAND

YOUR STORY — WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOU VALUE, WHAT THE PURPOSE OF YOUR ART IS; HOW CAN YOU CREATE AN EVEN MORE AUTHENTIC PRESENCE IN YOUR DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL SPACES? YOUR CURRENT BRANDING AND ITS RELEVANCE TO WHERE YOU ARE TAKING YOUR ART NEXT; HOW YOU WANT TO BE SEEN, HOW YOU WANT PEOPLE TO FEEL WHEN THEY INTERACT WITH YOU AND YOUR WORK. HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR ART TO LOOK AND FEEL?



CREATION

YOUR CRAFT — THE NEW IDEAS YOU HAVE, THE OLD IDEAS YOU WANT TO REVISIT; THE RECORDING YOU WANT TO COMPLETE OR NEW WORK YOU WANT TO WRITE; THE PEOPLE YOU WANT TO COLLABORATE WITH; HOW YOU WANT TO EXPAND YOUR EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS; WHERE YOU WANT TO TRAVEL FOR TOURS, INSPIRATION, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, FOCUSED STUDY; THE NEW CONTENT YOU'LL CREATE TO TELL MORE OF YOUR STORY. WHAT NEW LIFE WILL YOU BRING TO YOUR WORK?

LIFESTYLE

YOUR WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION — THE REST YOU NEED, TIME OFF, TRAVEL, SPACE TO BREATHE; HOW YOU WILL TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF SO YOU CAN POUR FROM A FULL CUP; CREATING BOUNDARIES FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM; YOUR RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILY LIFE, AND FRIENDSHIPS; THE STATUS OF YOUR MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL CAPACITIES AS YOU LIVE THE LIFE OF AN ENTREPRENEUR; EXPERIENCES YOU WANT FOR YOURSELF, FAMILY, AND BUSINESS. HOW CAN YOU MAKE YOU MORE OF A PRIORITY THIS YEAR?



NEW PRIORITIES

With a vision in mind of what your life looks like at the end of the year, you need to figure out what it's going to take to get you there, and the building blocks of your life — priorities, habits, and intentions — are the key to bringing you closer to that vision of your future self.

First, priorities. What needs your focus and attention this year? Review your thoughts on the last few pages and come up with a short and intentional list of what you want to focus on.

NEW HABITS

What are the habits you need to develop in order to see your priorities through?

Building new habits will help you achieve long-term success in the areas that are most important to you, and by focusing on building habits your priorities will feel much more manageable and will simply become *things* you do instead of *things you wish you were doing*.



NEW INTENTIONS: PEP TALK

It's one thing to make plans. It's another thing to see them through. You are the only one who can follow through on your intentions. No one in your life and no amount of worksheets or plans will achive your goals for you.

No matter what you set as your priorities for the new year, there's one ahead of them all: *you*. You need to be your first priority. You can't serve others, pursue you dreams wholeheartedly, or show up for your family if you're not taking care of yourself first.

So, on days when you wake up and find that you've abandoned all the plans you made, you'll need a pep talk. And because I know all too well that those days will come, the best person to give you advice in that moment is yourself, right here at the end of the year, cheering on the you of the future.

Use the space below to set your intentions and write yourself a pep talk that you can come back to again and again when you need to be reminded of what you're aiming for.





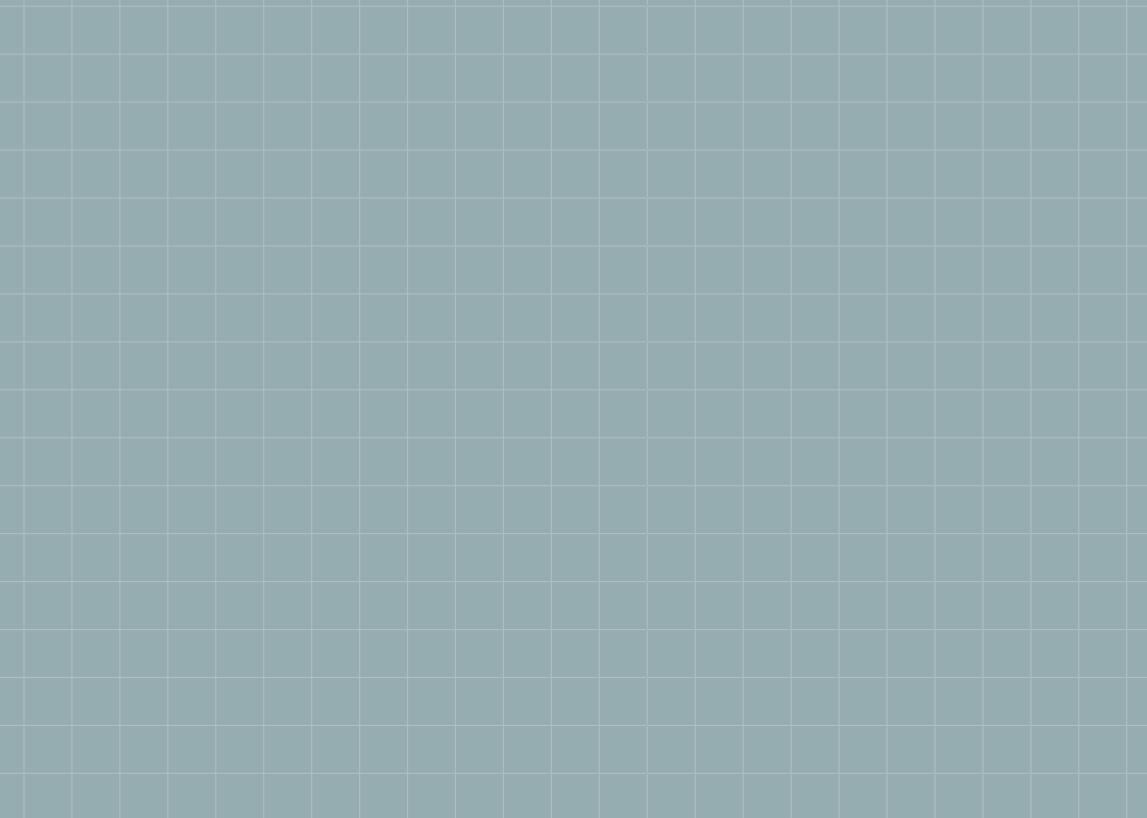
WORD OF THE YEAR

Here's one final exercise before we move from vision into action. If you could sum up what you want out of the new year in one word, what would it be? The nice thing about choosing a Word of the Year (WOTY) is that making plans or setting goals simply becomes about choosing what aligns with your WOTY. With a WOTY, decisions are simpler and easy to manage.

Look back over everything you wrote for your New Year Vision. What are the themes that kept coming back? When you brainstormed about what you want, did anything show up more than once? Maybe you are more invested in one Inventory category over another, why is that? Whatever they may be, use the space below to write out similarities, themes, patterns, or other energies, emotions, or feelings that are coming up for you as you look over your New Year Vision and Year In Review. Circle the words that stick out to you the most, the words that truly embody what you want for this next year.

Then, see if you can narrow them down to one word. One word that feels really good when you say it from the lens of your work. One word to help you craft the whole of your year, to guide your steps and help you make choices, and to sum up your vision.

WORD OF THE YEAR:



Action

Now we take your dreams and turn them into plans. This is where we create a seasonal vision for your life, a three-month or 90-day focused period to plan and execute specific goals. We begin by extracting the dreams that feel the most realistic to begin the year with and settle them into to-do lists. The second part of this process is defining what your versions of growth and success look like for this season. Having clear definitions will allow you to be realistic with your energy as you consider obligations, events, and the other unexpected plans life will throw your way.

SEASONAL PLANNING

Go back through your answers for your 2022 Vision and find the one idea or goal in each category that feels good to start the year with, keeping in mind your new Word of the Year (WOTY).

It is totally normal and expected for visions to grow and change. The point of this exercise is not to lay down the law of what will happen, but rather to give you structure and forward motion for your day to day. One way to do that is by taking your year-long vision and paring it down into seasonal action steps. The business world calls it quarterly planning, but for our purposes we'll talk about it in terms of a *season*, or a three-month period. Once you're set with the first three months of the year, you can continue to plan based on the cyclical seasons of the year as this system is laid out, or follow the seasons of your business. Either way, starting the year off strong and focused will lead to a greater chance of staying focused for the rest of the year.

If you'd prefer to have more than one goal in each category or no goals in one category, feel free. By concentrating on each area of your business, you're aiming for a well-rounded season, but this is simply a tool to help you decide what you want. When the end of this season rolls around, you can come back to the goals you brainstormed throughout Part Three and use the Annual Planner worksheets in the companion guide to the Almanac, The Creative's Calendar, to help you plan for the next season.

MANAGEMENT GOAL:	BRAND GOAL:	
CREATION GOAL:	LIFESTYLE GOAL:	

TO-DO LIST

Take your seasonal goals one step further by brainstorming the action steps you need to achieve each goal.

If it's helpful to you, set some deadlines for your To-Do List items and put the dates and action items in a planner or digital calendar. You'll have a clear plan for what needs to happen for the next three months and you'll also be able to determine the priority of each goal and use that as a way to gauge what needs to happen when. The column on the left side of each box acts as a checklist for you to cross items off when they are complete.

MANAGEMENT GOAL	BRAND GOAL
CREATION GOAL	LIFESTYLE GOAL



GROWTH & SUCCESS

One final and important step: defining what growth and success will look like for your during this upcoming season. It is very likely that your definitions of growth and success look different as you move through a year. This is an important aspect of business planning that is often overlooked because we assume that we have as much energy, time, brain space, etc. to give as the season previous. However, most of the time that's just not the case.

Acknowleding this fluctuation and appreciating that it provides an opportunity to work for a different kind of growth and success is one of the healthiest mindsets you can adopt for your life. You'll be able to course-correct when you need to, feel accomplished regardless of metrics or finances because you're rooted in the truth of what you're capable of giving right now, and lead your business, your team, and your family down a path that avoids burnout, disappointment, and frustration. You'll also have a clear measure of what needs to be accomplished this season and a place to start from when you get ready to plan for the next season.

Below, clearly define what growth and success will look like for you. How do you want to measure your growth? What does success look like right now?

	BRAND WHY:
:	SEASON:
	WORD OF THE YEAR:
	BENCHMARKS FOR GROWTH:
	1.
	2.
	3.
:	BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS:
	1.
	2.
	3.



NEXT STEPS

A little reflection: What are you most excited for the upcoming year?

After completing this, what direction do you want to head with your business? A few ideas:

- · Hire a strategist to dive deeper
- Create a seasonal planning ritual and return to your goals every three months with The Creative's Calendar
- · Post your current seasonal goals somewhere you will see them regularaly

LINKS & RESOURCES

Head to theinspiredfoundry.com/creativescollection for links to editable templates and more!



NOW THAT YOU HAVE A SOLID EXECUTION PLAN, IT'S TIME TO MAKE EVEN MORE MAGIC.

The Creative's Calendar {step four in The Creative's Collection}

The Creative's Calendar is the companion planner to The Creative's Almanac, providing you with an annual planner divided into 3-month seasons with project timelines, undated calendars, and plenty of space to brainstorm your next inspired idea.

The Creative's Compass {step one in The Creative's Collection}

The Creative's Compass is the definitive brand strategy guide for creative entrepreneurs. Whether you start with it or not, it's a handy tool to have to review your brand strategy from time to time and make sure everything still feels right.

Your Tiny Brand

Get the foundational elements of your visual branding - fonts, colors, and design elements - to kickstart your brand recognition online and IRL. We'll collaborate to craft a designer visual identity that reflects the magic of what you do *without* the designer price tag.

Think Tank Library

Get access to my favorite free resources to help you stay on-brand in everything you do.

HEAD TO THEINSPIREDFOUNDRY.COM FOR MORE DETAILS.

Come hang out on Instagram:

Karla Colahan @THEINSPIREDFOUNDRY

