



Sparking creativity

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The notion of stimulated creativity through an organized method dates back to 1953.

The initial description of the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) process began with Alex Osborn in his book *Applied Imagination*.

Osborn noticed that using deliberate processes and thinking tools resulted in increased levels of efficiency at managing change within the workplace.

An open-ended solving situation exists if a problem has been recognized and the solver believes that he or she can usefully challenge one or more of its boundary conditions. The lesser the solver is prepared to challenge the boundaries, the less open-ended the problem is seen to be.

A good number of techniques have been developed during these years. Some became very famous as the “lateral thinking” of Edward De Bono who, besides many others, “discovered” the horizontal drilling for oil companies.

A creative approach generally stumbles upon the orthodox and conservative thinking of most of the corporations. However it may offer advantages and provide the conditions to think “out of the box” and generate new ideas for products, processes and services.

A creative session shall be conducted by a facilitator, an experienced person who maybe part of the company, with a resource group (minimum six people).

Full guarantees shall be offered that everyone will be free to tell whatever comes to his/her mind in spite of whether it sounds reasonable or not. At the same time, nobody will be judged and or degraded because of its performance at the session.

One of the most effective techniques is called MPIA (mess – perspectives – ideas – action).

1. Examine the mess (30 minutes)

Discuss the purpose of the meeting, share information by using an spider diagram and make sure everybody understands the role and the timing of the process.

2. Searching new perspectives (30 minutes)

Find different angles under you can look at the problem.

3. Select a new perspective (30 minutes)

Try to find a totally different view of the problem.

4. Brainstorm for ideas. (45 minutes)

Generate as many ideas as possible without evaluation. Just throw all way-out ideas coming to your mind as this may lead to a winning idea.

This is the crucial stage. You may use the lateral thinking techniques, like:

- Reversal : Let’s think upside down. Get away from the obvious approach (pull instead of



push).

- WIBWI (Wouldn't it be wonderful if...): This is a powerful brainstorming technique. Just ask something unreal from the problem that will improve it.

- Random Juxtaposition: Pick a scenario, idea or concept that has nothing to do with the problem you want to solve to trigger off fresh thoughts. It is advisable when you are really stuck.

- Metaphors: When you are too familiar with the problem, it is useful to think on something only metaphorically attached to the issue (a metaphor to the real problem) and try to solve this situation.

- Explore ideas. (30 minutes)

Check every idea and classify them according to its value or possibilities to help solve the problem.

- Idea development (10 minutes)

Select a highly promising idea in terms of value and list its advantages.

- Idea implementation (10 minutes)

List the various potential shortcomings of the idea and examine how does it deal with the problem. If necessary goes back and modify the perspective again.

Many of the leading consumer products use this techniques constantly to come up with revolutionary ideas.

And remember, only continuous innovation is a sustainable advantage.