



Want to

Stay Ahead?

How to create a Creative Thinking Organisation

Alex Ow C. K.

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PREFACE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I remember presenting a talk in a company who is interested in creativity. When I finished, a gentleman asked me how other companies embark on creativity and what the benchmarks are. There are many different approaches to explain this question. I gave him some examples used by different companies and industries. The gentleman was very happy with my examples and commended my convincing illustrations. During the lunch session, other delegates asked me a similar question. I realized then that many of my clients are very concerned with good practices and are keen to know the effectiveness of the creativity tools presented by me. Obviously, they want to stay ahead through creativity transformation. I decided to compile my work experiences in the area of corporate creativity. I hope this book succeeds in helping its reader to understand and be a successful participant in creativity efforts.

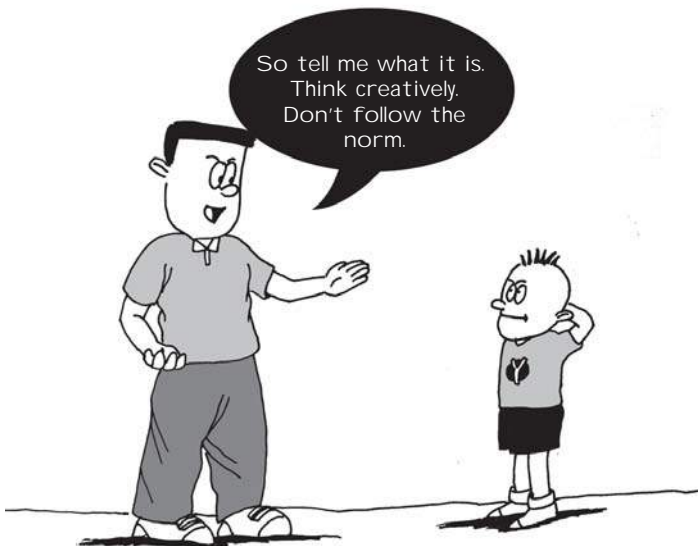
I would not have the opportunity to write this book if I am not involved in consulting, training, coaching, and teaching Dr. Edward de Bono's creativity methods. Dr. de Bono's methods give me the understanding of creativity work in practice. Thanks to Dr. de Bono again for the opportunity and encouragement. And thanks to all his personal assistants, Sophie, Sasha, Sandra, Kathy Myers (The leader in APTT) and Mr. & Mrs. Low.

Recognition also to all my clients, associates and friends who have contributed to this book. Dozens of people at each of these organizations deserve credit. I would not be able to write this book without their help and their invaluable inputs and their challenges in explaining, coaching and training people how to make creativity work to help them stay ahead in business competition. Appreciation also goes to Dr. Morris I. Stein, Dr. Gerard Puccio, and Dr. Mary Muddock, Dr. Michael Fox, and Mr. David Gonzalez who have provided me with the different dimensions of creativity.

Another driving force behind this book are my colleagues, Judy Ong, Jessica and other working associates whose patience, critical and creative mind have been intellectually stimulating and have also added to my stress level. Thank you very much for all your support and sacrifice. Finally, I have to thank Johnnie Liew who patiently put up with my scripts and constant pressure over my tight deadlines.

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Staying Ahead in Creative Thinking Organisations





1.1 Creative Thinking in Daily Improvement Process

In the last three years, many manufacturing companies have rebounded but have not recovered fully as market uncertainty still remains. My clients were reporting that the consumer market was still uncertain. More and more such complaints couldn't have come at the worse time. These companies have been cutting cost in order to survive and to stay competitive. Now their vendors and suppliers felt the pressure as their margins were cut as a result of reducing operating cost.

After numerous training & consulting assignments and discussions with my clients, I discover that many of the companies are working harder to satisfy their customers and responding faster to customers' complaints but they never spend time in creative thinking. In fact, in manufacturing environment all problem-solving must be based on facts and figures. Customers' expectations also increase and they demand immediate solutions as they have more time to audit

the suppliers' process and work. They are not moving forward drastically as solving current problems and clearing backlogs are more important to them.

The source of the problem was lack of efficiency in their work processes and high customers' requirements. In the past, semiconductor customers were too busy with operations and productions as orders were flowing in. The focus was delivery on time and product quality in meeting customers' specifications.

But as orders reduced and customers more demanding, they had to cut operation cost to sustain profits and improve margins. Investment in capital purchase, human resources development and many other initiatives were stopped as the economy sours and they need to rethink their priorities. Staff moral was going down and everyone was just maintaining their status quo. To suggest a new idea or suggestion meant a useless proposal and time wastage. And whenever something went wrong – say a machine breakdown or a spot problem – the responsible persons had to attend to them immediately. More problem-solving skills in defining the correct problem are required.

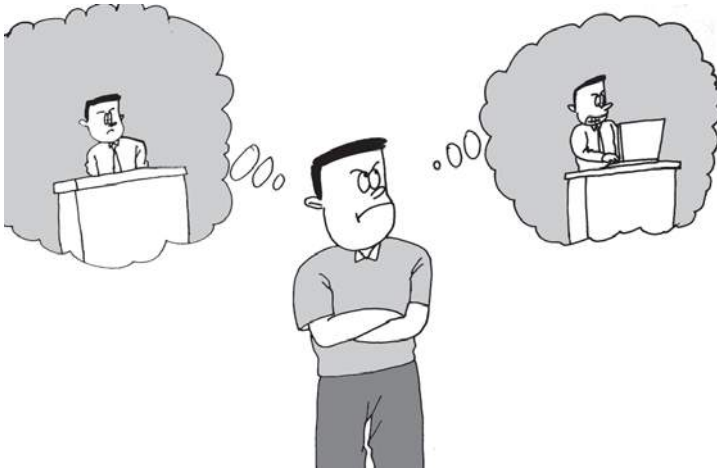
In many instances, employees in these companies are only concerned with removing faults but not preventing the same problems from arising again. When the next problem comes again, those employees who were unaware of the previous problem would start to solve the problem and spend unnecessarily time in investigating it. I always recommend that creative thinking be applied both in generating ideas during problem-solving and also in situations where improvements and capturing opportunities are needed.

One of the companies that I trained was committed to make radical changes in the work processes and culture but it was difficult to sell the message within the company. The idea to promote creativity among engineers met with resistance in the operations department that was busy with daily production output and product quality. Afterall, they had been operating and improving all these years against all human-factors criteria. There was a tendency to assume that any new improvements and new way of doing things must be from the top.

One of the companies that I trained discovered that any new ideas, suggestions and solutions to current work problems should be encouraged at the shop-floor level. So, a group of trained managers started to drive creative thinking among all engineers through formal lateral thinking and thinking tools. They set up creative thinking projects and incorporated the thinking tools in current quality and problem-solving process, then had the engineers to share their output with others. The result was encouraging as people now see how creative thinking works in real problems. Obviously, some people are uncooperative, skeptical and resist changes from the start. The challenge is to keep the creative thinking spirit alive and help the creative committee to redefine what are the 'Important Priorities' and 'Key Values' of the creative drive.

The initial creative projects proved crucial in convincing the employees that creative thinking is crucial in business competition. The committee proposed to use creative thinking in daily problem-solving and improvement processes. Instead of trying to start a new cultural change, the committee agreed that all creative thinking sessions and projects should link to existing projects in achieving the company goals. So, the creative thinking sessions should help the engineers to solve problems and carry out daily operational tasks. This means keeping the thinking tools easy to apply, simple to remember and the engineers can always use them when something goes wrong.

The results of these changes have been dramatic. Where it once took weeks on average to decide on a big project, it takes two hours with parallel thinking (Six Hats Method). Overall everyone was more open to ideas and willing to explore for possibilities when Lateral Thinking was applied in generating ideas. And because such thinking tools are easy to use, engineers are more willing to use them in solving problems.



1.2 Creative Thinking in Organizational Change

You may have heard someone talking about creativity or you may have read something in the company bulletin about creative or lateral thinking training. You probably thought, “What does creativity have to do with my job?” Later, during a department meeting, you learned that some other colleagues have successfully implemented new breakthrough ideas as a result of participating in creative thinking sessions. When your superior asked for volunteers to be a Blue Hat and Lateral Thinking facilitator, you wondered what it was all about.

A couple of weeks later, you are nominated to attend a training on ‘creativity’ and ‘lateral thinking.’ You are also invited to a briefing where a preview on ‘creativity’ was presented. Your managing director spoke, mentioning Bank Negara Malaysia, Petronas, Motorola and your company’s competitor. Examples of ‘creative thinking’ and how it could help your company save money, cut costs and add values in competitive environment were given. The trainer said that if the company believes in creativity, it would be on its way to be a market leader.

You were quite skeptical. Was 'creativity' or 'creative thinking' a fad or a new flavour-training programme? Could it really save money, cut costs and improve the current operating systems? 'What is this training called Six Thinking Hats and Lateral Thinking?' you wondered. 'Is it something useful for me or is it additional work for me?'

Over the past few months, more and more employees who have adopted Six Hats, Lateral thinking and Thinking Tools have benefited tremendously from a new way of thinking, and a new way of doing things. This resulted in a more dynamic workforce. A few of the employees have become the certified 'Blue Hatter' and 'Lateral Thinker'; others have taken on the roles as facilitators and members of creativity projects in this dramatic process of organizational change in creativity and innovation.

Discussion Questions

1. Reflect on a situation where you discovered that your work or department / organisation needed some creative thinking.
2. List down what you can do differently if you have an opportunity to reverse the process and the outcome result.
3. What are the processes or procedures that you would consider changing in order to get better results?
4. Do you think your people need creative thinking skills and what is the best approach to develop your people's creativity?

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Staying Ahead through Creative Thinking






2.1 Creative Thinking As A Breakthrough Strategy

Generally, the term ‘creative thinking’ refers to the use of cognitive skills and strategies to increase the generation and selecting alternatives and make judgment among them. Scholars often draw a distinction between the terms “innovation” and “employee creativity.” While ‘innovation’ refers to the successful implementation of new outcomes by an organization, ‘employee creativity’ refers to individuals’ generation of novel and useful products, ideas, and procedures that are the raw material for innovation. The ideas must be novel – different from what’s been done before – but they can’t be simply bizarre; they must be appropriate to the problem or opportunity presented.

According to de Bono (1969), the concept of creativity that is being considered is not artistic creativity. He said that creativity is a serious, deliberate, and systematic generation of new ideas, new concepts and new perceptions of value. Creativity means escaping from existing perceptions and concepts to open up new ways of looking at and doing things. It has to do with reconceptualizing

systems and ideas as well as creating new ones from scratch. Reconceptualization is sometimes necessary simply because things have changed, and new information is available. The original concept is no longer effective in the present circumstances.

In my opinion, a breakthrough strategy has the effects on an organization bottom line and is able to change a process, a policy or a product completely. A breakthrough process has components similar to the creative thinking process. It includes identification of a consumer need, generation of new and novel idea to meet the need, putting the new idea into practice until commercialization. In creative thinking, it supports the entire breakthrough process from generating novel and effective idea to bringing the idea into the marketplace.

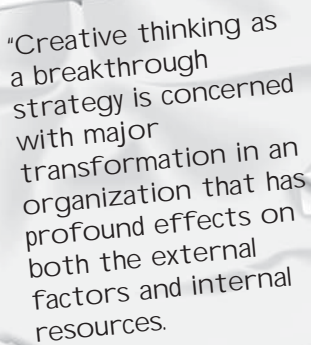


"Creativity means escaping from existing perceptions and concepts to open up new ways of looking at and doing things."

Creative thinking as a breakthrough strategy is concerned with major transformation in an organization that has profound effects on both the external factors and internal resources. External factors are political issues, legislations and laws; economical issues; social issues, consumer acceptance; technological issues, technical know-how and competitions whereas internal resources are concerned with human resources, skills-sets, head counts; physical resources, assets and machinery, tools, buildings; financial resources, budgets, money and funding; systems and policies, guidelines; intangible resources, organization image, and cooperation from others. A breakthrough strategy is an integrated process in an organization functions. It is usually sparked off from market needs or technological updates or more importantly what the organization wants to do. A successful idea requires involvement of both the idea producer and the management who translate the idea into reality.

The breakthrough ideas should also include day-to-day operation ideas. For example, an engineer who has an idea to reduce a process cycle time or improve the process output or an office staff with a creative idea to improve record keeping and retrieval system or a customer service officer getting an idea on how to handle customer request and ensure repeat sales. Bringing an idea into practice or translating ideas into reality requires many other elements working together and time duration in evaluating and developing the ideas. I shall discuss these in more details in later chapters.

According to the inventor of the Intel microprocessor, Marican E. Ted Koff, the important thing is ability to bend the rule. In 1960s, when he was with Intel, a calculator company named "Basicom" asked Intel to manufacture a set of 12 custom chips for some new calculators. He explored the possibility to have one



"Creative thinking as a breakthrough strategy is concerned with major transformation in an organization that has profound effects on both the external factors and internal resources.

chip, a general-purpose central processor that could be programmed to do all the functions. To his credit, Intel's upper management was open enough to let him experiment with his idea. The managers allowed him not only to do what the customer wanted but also encouraged him to do better. This is an example on how creative thinking is used as a breakthrough strategy.

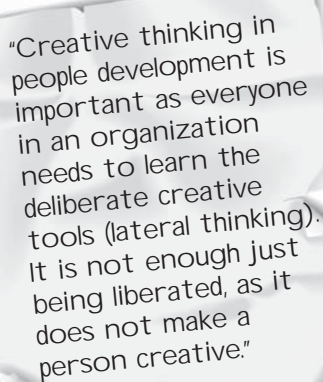
You guys must be creative and flexible. Use the right martial art



2.2 Creative Thinking As A People Development Strategy

Throughout my training and consulting experience in creative thinking training especially Dr. de Bono's work, I discover that most people in organizations resent major changes and resist creativity. I believe the reason is quite obvious. Firstly, they may view any new approach, tools and techniques as a gimmick or a fad. Secondly, why should they change after so many years of operation in a stable environment or the why me syndrome? Thirdly it's lack of support, leaders and champion to sustain the momentum as payoff can only be seen later and not immediately. Other reasons could be that the people are not willing to take risks, no proper creative training for everyone and no encouragement for innovation.

Most of the organizations spend a lot of time in people development focusing on people competency. As Edward de Bono said that housekeeping and



“Creative thinking in people development is important as everyone in an organization needs to learn the deliberate creative tools (lateral thinking). It is not enough just being liberated, as it does not make a person creative.”

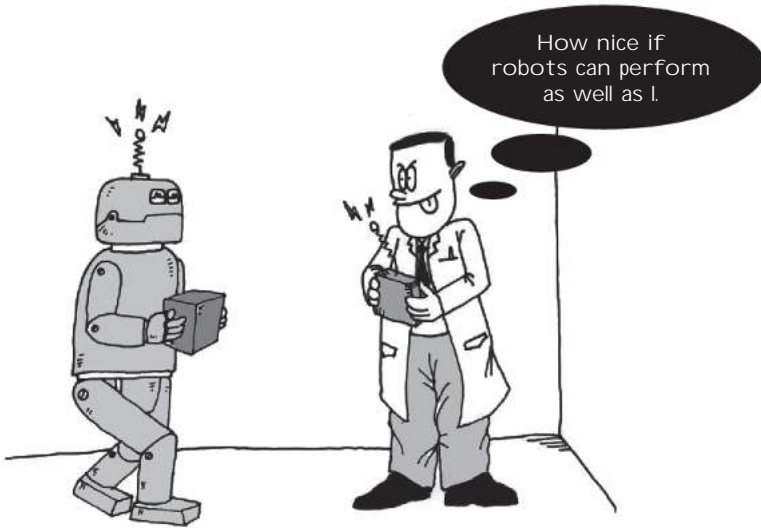
competence are not going to be enough in the future as information and competence will become commodities. Creativity is essential in order to create new value. My experience is that creative thinking as a people development strategy must start from the top but with down liners support. It should not structure as a prerequisite programme before everyone can participate in creative thinking. Generally, people expect miracles to happen after a

formal training and this usually does not happen as good creative ideas will surface when the users are confident and motivated to use the thinking tools. In return, it is recommended to start in small groups in every department or unit and link all creative efforts to the departmental or unit goals. The managers or sponsors and process facilitators should reinforce the learning of thinking skills through creativity events, rewards and recognition. In most situations, people learn better through others; learning from other successful projects, illustrations and examples. These reinforcements in people development can be done through publicity for example in local bulletin, intranet or internet system and established policies to encourage risk-taking in generating ideas and provision of free time and rewards in creative thinking. Early successes are essential in sustaining momentum as I mentioned earlier that cultural change will take some time and then bottom-line payoff will begin.

Creative thinking in people development is important as everyone in an organization needs to learn the deliberate creative tools (lateral thinking). It is not enough just being liberated, as it does not make a person creative. The simple thinking tools for ‘focus thinking’ and ‘six thinking hats’ framework for ‘parallel thinking’ are some tools where we can increase our thinking productivity. Dr. de Bono always reminds us that we need to move on from a concern with “what is” (measuring existing status and abilities) to “what can be” (training in methods and skills).

In my training and consulting, it is interesting to observe how creative thinking spreads and blooms from a department or unit to the whole organization. Those departments, which are less participative in training, begin to think and act more creatively. They are further encouraged when management are more supportive of creative thinking, provide the time, expertise, funding and encouragement in risk-taking. Usually, I would recommend an organization to use creative thinking in transforming a creativity workforce and not for an individual purpose or just to fit into the training programmes.

According to Michael Dell, the founder, chairman and the CEO of Dell Computer, innovation in Dell is about taking risks and learning from failure. Backed in 1989, Dell had to deal with a very large disaster. When the personal computer industry was making the transition to a new type of memory chip, Dell found they have stocked up too many chips of the old kind. It took them about a year to recover and they learned from their mistake. This failure led them to develop a new way to manage inventory and today, they are well-known for inventory management, supply chain management and logistics. In Dell, the management do their best to make sure that their employees aren't afraid of the possibility of failure and allow them to do a lot of experiments. One manager in the consumer group came up with the idea to offer installation service to consumers in order to reach people who might be apprehensive about setting up a computer. The idea seemed like it would help out a group of customers and it makes a lot of sense from a cost standpoint as well. Their experience shows that this also reduces the set-up failures. They did a pilot with one group of sales people and identified what works and what don't. Within two weeks, they made the services available to every consumer in the United States. Michael Dell reminded us that we need to encourage innovation as a people development strategy especially when your company is doing well – creative people can come up with creative ideas continuously and consistently all the time.



2.3 Creative Thinking As A Management Tool

A management tool includes responsibility for results and continuous reviews to ensure success. Creative Process champions can use creative thinking tools as a guide to manage the business. In a competitive business environment, all companies want innovative solutions. Today, better quality and better service are essential, but they are not enough. Creativity and innovation are the only engines that drive lasting, global success. Management need a fast, effective tool to help them to solve tough problems and create new ideas, new products, new processes and new services.

The common application of creative thinking or creativity is in problem-solving. This includes the way of defining problems and generating, selecting and implementing suitable ideas for a specific problem. Creative problem framing allows the rejection of the “obvious” or usual answer to a problem in favour of asking a wholly different question. Unfortunately, it has also gained a reputation among practitioners as a fringe activity and normally is of little use outside

brainstorming. In solving problems, we should be proactive to generate and select alternatives. When we generate ideas, we need to open up new directions of thinking and search for new opportunities or new concepts while removing the cause of a problem. Generally, a creative problem-solving process has three steps:

1. Problem Definition or Challenge or Focus Area.
2. Idea Generation through Creative Thinking.
3. Plan for Action and Implementation.

Problem Definition or Focus Area is generally the broad statement of an issue that needs to be addressed. Some of the statements are directional when they specify the intended outcomes or results whereas others are broadly defined. In lateral thinking, defining a clear focus area is important as it directs the users to do one of the following:

1. Implementing a Task, or
2. Capturing an Opportunity, or
3. Solving a Problem, or
4. Improving on an existing process or item.

Sometimes, we need to refine many possible focus areas from which a few definitions are selected for the idea generation step.

Idea Generation stage is where the user apply a list of creative thinking techniques to generate a wealth of ideas in relation to the selected focus area. Then the ideas are captured and refined to a more feasible and usable ideas. Ideas are selected based on the criteria proposed by the user or a team of users.

Planning for Action and Implementation stage is translating ideas into reality. Plans are developed to implement the selected ideas. The plans should detail the steps, deadlines, resources required and the persons in charge.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the approaches which you can take to develop creative thinking as a breakthrough strategy in your organisation?

2. If you were to develop creative thinking as a people development strategy, how would you plan to go about it?

3. If you plan to implement creative thinking as a management tool, what are the steps you would take?

03

Transformation into a Creative Workforce



Creative thinking is also useful in focus thinking. For example, Six Thinking Hats is a framework to encourage parallel thinking. Experience has shown that the Six Hats system is much more powerful and constructive than arguments or discussions. As a result of creative thinking, management in organizations has improved their decision-making, conduct better meetings, save time and also generate better ideas. I shall explain the meaning of the hats later.

Craig Wynett is the general manager of future growth initiatives at Proctor & Gamble in Cincinnati. According to him, innovation must be integrated into mainstream business and be treated as a management tool. The artificial connectivity between creativity and leadership means that innovation provides the clear visibility for success and is supported by credible leaders. For innovation to be reliable, it needs to be addressed systematically, like any business issue in which you define the problem and then solve it: What do we want to accomplish, and how? What resources will we need? Who will be on the team? How do we motivate and reward them? And how will we measure success? At P & G, they think of creativity as the everyday task of making non-obvious connections – bringing together things that don't normally go together. For example, they developed a product called ThermaCare, a disposable heating pad that provides regulated low-level heat for at least eight hours. People don't want to live with the pain, but they don't want to take painkillers. The research team sees an opportunity to come up with a product that resolves a paradox without requiring any trade-offs – ThermaCare.

Think of creativity as a set of tools to help your organization to create new values and to provide you the road map to differentiate your organization from competitors. This set of tools has three integrated domain, which takes you to the same goal. The scope of transformation that an organization chooses will determine the scope and depth of these three (3) domains.

Think 1: Creativity On Demand

The changes of demand in our nature of work and the information explosion explain the reasons why thinking skills are becoming essential. The creativity on demand takes the fastest route in transforming creative workforce. This approach targets middle level and operational level where the trained person in an

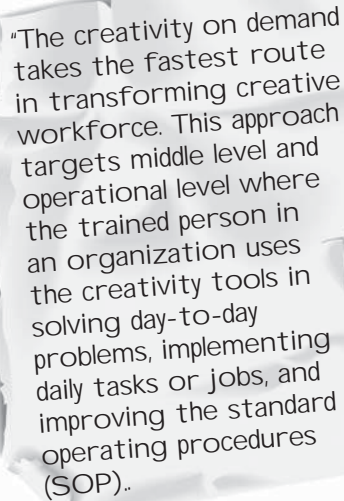
organization uses the creativity tools in solving day-to-day problems, implementing daily tasks or jobs, and improving the standard operating procedures (SOP). The creativity tools are treated as bullets in a cartridge ready to be uploaded as and when necessary.

Imagine going into a production department and seeing on the walls lists of 'diagrams, charts and process flow', these being descriptions on how the people in the department manufacture the products, deliver the service, do their audit and do their sampling quality inspection and

And imagine next to the lists are another list of questions and provocative statements on how they could carry out those procedures differently. Have you seen any of these sorts in your organization?

The creativity on demand approach is best for organizations that want to improve their current process status and tap into creativity without creating major changes within the organization. If your organization takes this approach, there is a probability that only few departments are actively involved in creative thinking unless your organization takes another turn after this stage. The direct benefit of this approach is to focus on immediate needs and addressing the First Important Priorities (FIP) and the Key Values of the items rather than on a whole list of items in a total organization.

One of the companies that have taken this approach is a Pay TV station. They trained their executives in various departments on creative thinking. After the training the executives are held responsible for a variety of improvements such as TV programmes planning, subscribers' satisfaction, technical operation and employee working morale. Every single executive works individually or in a team of five to six people to think creatively in generating novel and practical ideas on the key problems. Although the company has trained a number of people and some projects are completed in a few months, that's all the efforts of creativity.

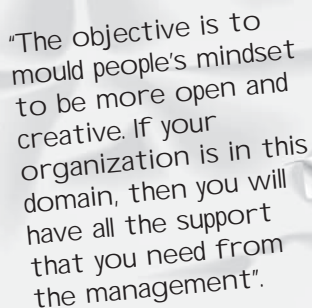


"The creativity on demand takes the fastest route in transforming creative workforce. This approach targets middle level and operational level where the trained person in an organization uses the creativity tools in solving day-to-day problems, implementing daily tasks or jobs, and improving the standard operating procedures (SOP)..

Hence, if this company only takes creativity as just a problem-solving routine or an improvement task, then they have not explored the power of creativity yet.

Think 2: The Workforce Transformation

Is your organization placing importance on people development and training? Have your people fallen into a comfort zone and need a wake-up call? Are there more customers' complaints and your people are turning a deaf ear to them and your people are frustrated as there are no positive changes to benefit them? From my observation and experience, many successful organizations often sense the need to break away from old habits and think outside the box. If your organization is transforming a creative workforce through creative thinking skills as a business model, then you are in this domain.



"The objective is to mould people's mindset to be more open and creative. If your organization is in this domain, then you will have all the support that you need from the management".

In transforming a creative workforce, all the top management is involved. They understand the need of creativity and are committed to change. They would set the new waves of changing through intensive communication, video conferencing with chairman and top people in the company, creative gatherings, articles of creativity in company newsletters or bulletins, briefings and road show explaining what is creative thinking and how creativity will help.

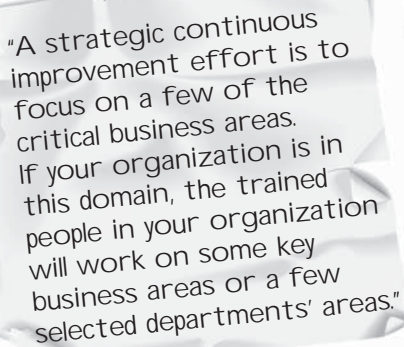
You may have heard phrases such as "new thinking", "new way of doing things", "think creatively", or "think outside the box". Everyone is in the mood of change and adopting a new thinking culture. Every department is required to set-up creativity projects and the managers are trying to derive results from the projects. The creative thinking process is used to improve the key business result areas or a main product. Some of the key business result areas include the sales process, distribution process, customer support process, logistic process, manufacturing process and quality process. The objective is to mould people's mindset to be more open and creative. If your organization is in this domain, then you will have all the support that you need from the management. However, all creative

work must be justifiable as it will be measured, and evaluated. The creative output will have a strong impact on your work because how you interact with external and internal customers will be linked to your performance appraisal system.

Some of these companies are NTT, Motorola, Bank Negara Malaysia, National Semiconductor, Du Pont and others.

Since December 1999, IBM has been working on a project called Blue Gene, which is a computer, designed to model the protein-folding process in genetics. According to them, that work requires a huge advance in computing power. The research team used a radical approach to allow a small machine to perform more than one quadrillion operations per second. In IBM, the company places few constraints on its researchers. The researchers are continuously encouraged to spend time exploring new ideas and asking “what if?” questions and they are allowed to pursue their interest in ideas development. Mark Dean, the vice-president of systems of IBM Research in New York is an engineer and inventor. He explained how he transformed the project teams to keep reaching for new ideas. He said that his role is to create a collaborative environment where his people can come out with fast solutions. He provides the focus, sets reasonable goals and maps out the timelines. He always stresses the importance of coming up with a solution quickly and then continues to enhance it rather than trying to strive for a 100% product.

Think 3: Strategic Continuous Creativity



“A strategic continuous improvement effort is to focus on a few of the critical business areas. If your organization is in this domain, the trained people in your organization will work on some key business areas or a few selected departments’ areas.”

Generally, in creative thinking we don't expect to achieve quantum improvement overnight. Sometimes, continuous improvement is more important as this will encourage users to practise creative thinking continuously. A strategic continuous improvement effort is to focus on a few of the critical business areas. If your organization is in this

domain, the trained people in your organization will work on some key business areas or a few selected departments' areas. This approach is similar to the workforce transformation but it is on a smaller scale. The creative efforts are less extensive and less aggressive. From my experience, if the organizations have started with this domain they may tend to evolve into total organization creativity if the initial projects are successful.

As an example of this strategic continuous creativity, a major wafer-producing plant is running a few creative training classes and putting people in teams to work on some key business problems. Some of the more experienced engineers were selected as process facilitators to oversee the projects. They already have the management approval initially but they believe that the next step is to show some results at the departmental levels before the idea is presented to management for total workforce transformation.

In Lincoln Electric, they look at creativity and innovation systematically. Their approach is to build on a steady stream of improvements in every function, both the strategic business functions and the supporting functions. They make sure their people can be creative and innovative by creating an environment that gives them all the back up they need. The five activities below need a high level of discipline and persistency in order to institutionalize innovation in the organization. The five activities are:

1. Creating and sustaining a corporate environment that values better performance.
2. Structuring the organization to permit innovative ideas to rise above the demands of running the business.
3. Clearly defining a strategic focus that let the company channel its innovation efforts realistically.
4. Knowing where to look for good ideas and how to leverage them once they are found.
5. Going after good ideas at full speed, with all the company's resources.

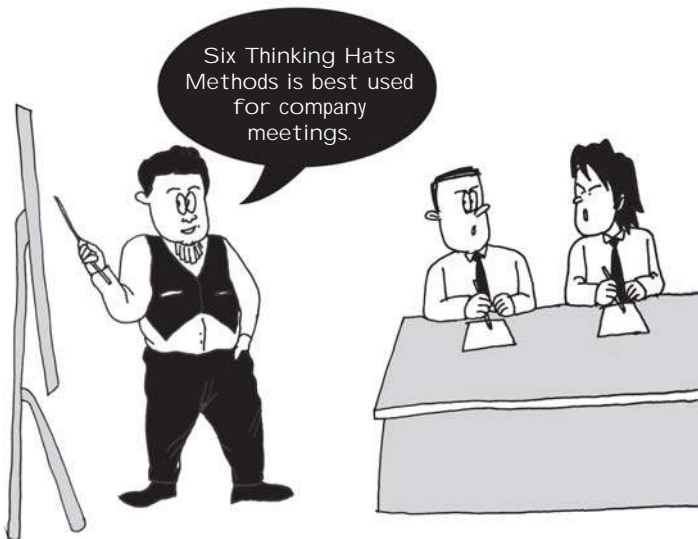
To build a continuous creativity culture, we have to create an organization that not only focus on special creativity projects, but also sustains the commitment. This needs a major shift in the value system that requires constant dedication to changing things for the better. Change is a way of life in companies such as Apple Computer, Nike, Wal-Mart stores, Toy "R" Us and others.

Discussion Questions

1. Suggest 2 ideas on how you plan to transform your people through creativity on demand?
2. Name 3 most important support you need when transforming your workforce in an organisation.
3. List down the most critical business areas in your organisation needing immediate attention if you plan to transform your people to be continuously creative strategically.

044

Edward de Bono Creative Thinking Teams in Organisations



The purpose of this chapter is to discuss a powerful thinking method for building creative thinking culture in organizations. These methods are based on some ideas originally proposed by Dr. Edward de Bono in his book 'Six Thinking Hats', 'Serious Creativity' and 'Teach Yourself How To Think.'

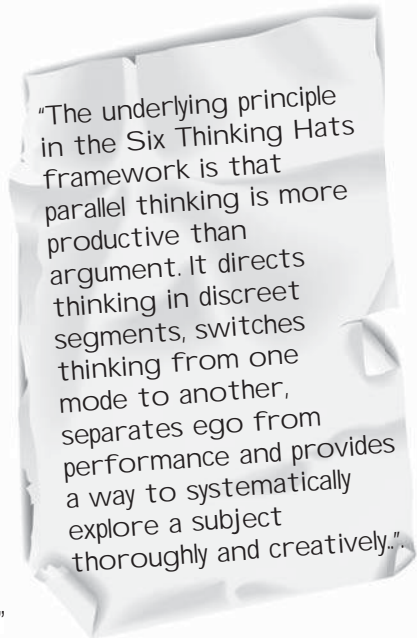
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4.1 Six Thinking Hats Methods

The Six Thinking Hats designed by Dr. Edward de Bono, is a framework to think through a subject in a focused way that makes time and space for creative thinking. It helps us to escape from adversarial thinking, and avoid confusion so we will become more focused, generate synergy and achieve results. The tools were designed based on a fundamental understanding of how the brain handles information. It is used extensively in companies such as Dupont, IBM, Prudential Life Insurance, and Siemens and others to have efficient and productive meetings. In fact many of these organizations have reported that the use of 'Six Hats' can reduce meeting time to half.

The underlying principle in the Six Thinking Hats framework is that parallel thinking is more productive than argument. It directs thinking in discreet segments, switches thinking from one mode to another, separates ego from performance and provides a way to systematically explore a subject thoroughly and creatively.

There are six different colours i.e. six different modes of thinking. Each different colour represents a different dimension in thinking about the subject being addressed. Everyone wears the same hat at the same time. The hats can be put on and taken off depending on the sequence of the thinking process. It can be used individually, in meetings or in conversation with other people. When we use it by ourselves, we may say, "Putting on my Green Hat, I would like to suggest the following alternatives." Or "Putting on my Yellow Hat, I could see the value of this idea."



When we talk to someone and that someone is very emotional at the moment, we may say, "Take off your Red Hat and let's have some White Hat thinking." This is a way of getting different types of thinking, switching thinking quite abruptly without offence.

In meetings, we could also use the Six Hats. Someone can say, "Let's have 3 minutes Green Hat thinking or Yellow Hat or White Hat." It is a powerful way of switching thinking and it encourages us to do parallel thinking, increases our exploration and avoids adversarial thinking.

Here I explained briefly the Six Thinking Hats framework and a thorough treatment is in Dr. De Bono's book.

White Hat - White Hat is associated with paper. It represents neutral information, which includes data and unproven facts. We can use questions to identify the relevant gaps, needs and requirements. In White Hat thinking, we establish what we have, what we do not have and how we are going to get it.

Red Hat- Think of Red as fire and warmth. The Red Hat is concerned with feelings, hunches and intuition. In many occasions especially in formal meetings, we know we should not allow our feelings to intrude but they always intrude and we disguise them. Using Red Hat, it allows us to signal that this is a feeling. These feelings may be from our years of experience and we may not know the reasons for them. For example, I feel that it is too time-consuming or I think this idea might not work. Red Hat gives us full permission to put forward our feelings with no reasons or justifications.

Black Hat - Think of a judge's roles. The role of a judge is to see that we do not do any illegal things. Black Hat is possibly the most overused. For example, if we over exercise and strain ourselves, it could be harmful. In Black Hat thinking, we question why it does not work and why it does not fit what we already know. It could be facts, experiences, policies, system, ethics etc. Black Hat could be used in two ways. First, it is used to point out weaknesses in an idea and secondly to assess an idea at the end of a thinking process.

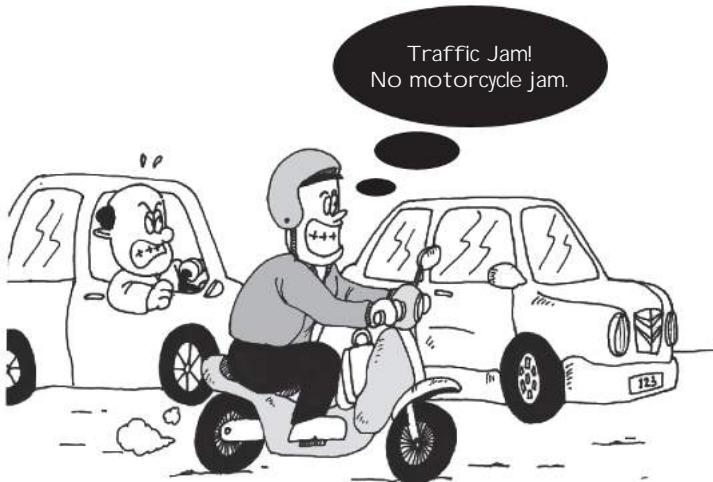
Yellow Hat - Think of sunshine and optimism. The Yellow Hat represents the logical positive aspects of thinking. The hat looks for feasibility, benefits, advantages and savings. It seeks to show how something can be done. There must be reasons for what is claimed. Yellow Hat is less natural than Black Hat; it requires more deliberate effort to find values and benefits.

Green Hat -

Think of vegetation, growth and energy. The Green Hat is a 'Creative' Hat. The hat is for new ideas, possibilities, provocations and further alternatives. The hat allows us formally to ask for creativity. The hat allows us to create a micro culture for creativity at any moment. The Green Hat is also used to reverse the natural dominance of Black Hat. For example, when someone is persistently negative, like "I don't want to..." or "I cannot do..." or "I don't understand ...", we ask the person to switch his/her thinking to Green Hat thinking.

Blue Hat -

Think of blue as the blue sky or overview. The Blue Hat is a process control. The Blue Hat manages the thinking process itself. The Blue Hat wearer stands back and comments on the thinking that needs to take place or is taking place.



4.2 Lateral Thinking Application

Dr. Edward de Bono describes the mind as a self-organizing system where our thinking organizes information and experience into patterns. Pattern thinking is useful as it helps us to lead a daily life routine. If not, we will need to learn every morning how to put on our shirt or wear our shoes. In solving problems, normal pattern of thinking is essential but if we need to solve difficult and complex problems, we need to break away from normal thinking in order to get new concepts or a new way of doing something.

"Dr. de Bono defines lateral thinking as 'Changing concepts and perceptions.'"

Dr. de Bono defines lateral thinking as 'Changing concepts and perceptions.' In the Oxford dictionary, it is defined as 'Seeking ways to solve problems by apparently illogical means.'

The deliberate lateral thinking tools designed by Dr. de Bono is based on the understanding on how the brain as a self-organizing information system forms asymmetric patterns. In order to break away from the normal pattern, we need to move laterally in order to cut across the pattern. Dr. de Bono invented the word 'PO' which means provocation operations to help us move laterally. We then use the mental operation of movement in order to move on from the provocation to generate ideas. According to him, movement is an active mental operation and it is not just suspension of judgment.

In the figure above, imagine you always use the same road to your workplace. If you were to return home using a different road, a side road from the north, you may likely discover a much shorter and bigger road that takes you back home sooner. In lateral thinking, we use provocation to take us to the side roads as a stepping-stone to move laterally out from the normal routine. The bolder the provocation, the better the chance that will lead to good and novel ideas.

The process generally takes three (3) steps:

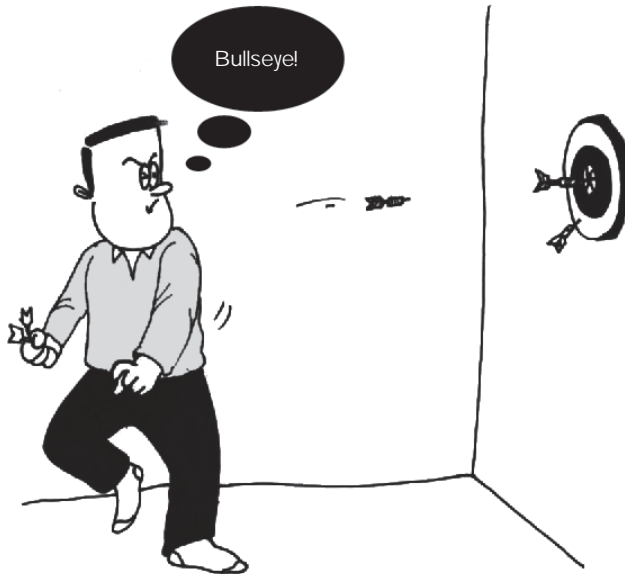
1. Focusing on an area that requires creative ideas.
2. Setting up provocations that relate to the focus area using the formal provocation techniques such as Escape PO, Reversal PO and Wishful Thinking PO.

3. Generating of creative ideas addressing the focus area, using the movement techniques on the provocations.

In lateral thinking, there is a tool called “Random Entry”. This method is an association trigger. It is making an observation about an object, event or thought associated with a need that might trigger a new idea on how to meet that need. It involves having a purpose focus and brings a word or noun into mind in order to provide a new approach to generate new ideas.

The concept triangle is another lateral thinking method used to generate many alternatives for meeting a defined task – a purpose focus. Starting with an idea to achieve the purpose focus, we defined the relevant concept(s) involved in the idea and then generate actionable ideas related to the concept(s). The concept triangle leads to a defining of different concepts and ideas to achieve the purpose focus.

The challenge method is another method of lateral thinking. This method helps us to deliberately question the existing paradigms and boundaries in our mind. Challenge is not just a matter of setting out to find ideas around a subject but of challenging something specific that exists. It is possible to get good ideas by challenging something that appears to be perfect. Challenge is always based on the existing situation: “What is?” It is not concerned with trying to change the situation or finding a solution to a problem. When we apply this technique, we can use it in challenging what is out there or what is going on in our mind.




4.3 Direct Attention Thinking Tools

According to Dr. de Bono, thinking is like cooking, driving a car or playing tennis. If we regard IQ as the power of the car, then thinking is the skill with which it is driven. As with all skills the more you practise the better you become. The Direct Attention Thinking Tools (DATT) is an aid to thinking. The tools direct our attention and prevent us to drift from point to point and to wander about. Without such tools, things become complicated and confusing, things will crowd inside our mind when we try to remember everything at once. The tools direct our mind to do only one thing at a time – a definite task. Each tool has been assigned a name that is easy to remember and also has a visual symbol, which suggests the nature of the process.

It is important that the thinker concentrates on the purpose of his / her thinking so that what is actually produced relates to the purpose focus. The thinking process should be kept simple, practical and deliberate. DATT is

“software for the mind”. The thinking tools help us to make good decisions and solve problems. Amongst others, the tools will help us avoid bad decisions. Our current thinking is usually not wrong; it simply isn’t targeted as well as it should be. Studies have proven that when people are specifically asked to use DATT thinking tools, their thinking dramatically improves.



“Our current thinking is usually not wrong; it simply isn’t targeted as well as it should be.”

The DATT tools work because it is based on a fundamental understanding of how the brain handles information. The methods you’ll learn are very simple and practical. In real life, things are not neatly put in front of us for us to access. We have to go out and get information. We design a plan and we take action. We have to direct our mental attention to those factors that matter most. The DATT tools are designed to carry out specific functions. In general, the use of the tools can be classified as:

1. Evaluation tools.
2. Exploration tools.
3. Value tools.
4. Action tools.

In conclusion, the thinking tools help us to plan, design, reengineer and continually improve. It can also help us solve problems, improve quality, become team leaders, accept new responsibility, add value to customers and create or restructure products and systems. The details are found in Edward de Bono’s book “Teach Yourself To Think”: Penguin publication. 1992.

Discussion Questions

1. What is 6 hats thinking and why do we need to use the 6 hats system?
2. Name all the 6 hats and what they stand for.
3. Lateral thinking tools were developed by Dr. Edward de Bono to help us generate creative ideas. Name 2 lateral thinking tools and explain how the tools work.
4. Our current thinking is usually not wrong; it simply isn't targeted as well as it should. How can we improve our thinking in order to be more focused?

05

Tips in Cultivating a Creative Organisation in Practice

motto: Creative working attitude
builds marvellous creative ideas.



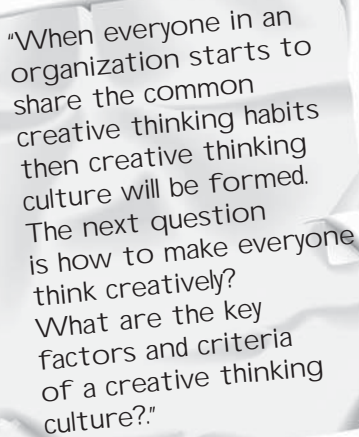


5.1 Creative Thinking Culture in Practice

What is exactly creative thinking culture? Culture only exists in practice not in theory. When everyone in an organization starts to share the common creative thinking habits then creative thinking culture will be formed. The next question is how to make everyone think creatively? What are the key factors and criteria of a creative thinking culture? In my course of training & consulting, there are two main parts in creating a creative thinking culture in an organization. The first part is dealing with 'The Carrots' – the motivators and 'The Pillars' – the support system. The carrots are items, which motivate and encourage people to be creative and to influence others to be creative. The pillars are the support system that enables creativity to flourish and bloom. In a creative thinking organization, all the items in both categories must be in place to entice, encourage, support and direct all creative efforts in the same direction towards organization goals. There are companies who have well intention in building creative thinking culture but their internal policies are not supporting it. Sometimes either there are too

many conflicting policies which direct creative efforts in different directions or inconsistent policies or too much of red tapes in the policies.

For example, when Mr. A has an idea in improving a corporate process flow or in developing a new product that requires cooperation from other departments, he brings the




"When everyone in an organization starts to share the common creative thinking habits then creative thinking culture will be formed. The next question is how to make everyone think creatively? What are the key factors and criteria of a creative thinking culture?"

idea to his manager. Unfortunately, the manager is not supportive as it is not directly related to his department. Another possible reason is that Mr. A's idea relates to other departments and does not directly benefit his department. Even if Mr. A has brilliant ideas, he may not get his support as his manager may prefer to support other projects even though it is less exciting than Mr. A's idea. This is because his manager's performance is measured by his own departmental performance. Obviously, some will argue that Mr. A should approach the


top management or the people in corporate level, as these people will have the authority and budgets. However, not all organizations practise open door concept. In fact, in my experience I discover that many organizations have their own departmental policies and boundaries. If these organizations redesign a different approach, which requires each department to get their budget from the corporate people, and the performance is measured both on departmental level and the corporate level, then this will encourage everyone to practise creativity.

All these need a good management system, policy and mechanism in encouraging creative thinking. The mechanism must be structured and enable the ideator (a person who comes up with creative idea) to push his good ideas through the management. In developing this mechanism, we need the Carrots and the Pillars. The items in these two domains are not divided distinctively but they are overlapping. They may also integrate with each other depending on an organization policy and goals.



Where's the treasure.
It must be around here
somewhere.

5.1 Creative Thinking Culture in Practice



Fantastic!
You're just broken
the record.

5.2.1 Performance Measurement

In any creative thinking organization, they need clear mission, system & structure and leadership in order to sustain the creativity culture. A clear mission provides a clear and committed direction for the management towards creative thinking culture. System & structure are concerned with policies and procedures that encourage, measure and reward ideas. Leadership is dealing with people and positions. People are the leaders and managers who are in charge with creative projects and the positions are relating to the line of authority and span of control of a creative work group.

Within these elements, there is a performance measure which applies to the creative project i.e. the measure is on the number of creative ideas generated, the number of ideas submitted to creative committee, the numbers of ideas accepted and the number of ideas selected for development. A more detailed measurement will include measurement in terms of number of people to be trained, the extent of ideas sharing, the extent of team participation in creative thinking, the outcome or output that result from creative thinking, time spent in generating ideas, time spent in evaluating and developing the ideas. Some items are easily measured and others are not.

From my experience, not every organization is ready for creative thinking. If organizations have reached a high level of maturity in creativity, then the measurement of creative thinking can be done in terms of profits gained in new product development. Otherwise, it is advisable to measure creative thinking in phases such as number of staff trained in creativity, then number of creative projects undertaken by the staff, followed by time allocated in creative thinking and evaluation.



5.2.2 Training and Development

As Dr. de Bono once said, creative thinking shall not only exist in theory but they should be applied in practice. Everyone should be taught how to think creatively. Training and development should focus on this core area where people in organizations are not only aware of the importance of thinking skill but also develop the necessary knowledge and skills in creative thinking. My experience tells that this type of training should be handled with care, as not everyone is receptive to changes due to creativity. Some of the staff in organizations might be too busy and comfortable in solving daily problems than to explore a new way of doing things. Some organizations might prefer to create awareness and induction programmes through briefings and talks followed up by formal training such as 'Edward de Bono Six Thinking Hats', 'Lateral Thinking' and 'Thinking Tools' and a series of refresher courses to motivate the staff.

Everyone in an organization should be given the opportunity to learn and adopt creativity. If possible, it should be a top-down approach where the training starts from the top and cascade downwards. If not, the training can start in a unit or a department and spread across to other departments. Obviously, it would be faster

and have more impact when the management adopt creative thinking at their level. A day formal training or a few hours' briefing by an experienced trainer will be able to explain the importance of creative thinking and demonstrate some of the creative tools i.e. lateral thinking. The formal training sessions can take many forms. One way is to divide the people into three (3) key categories. They are the process facilitators, sponsors and creative members.

- A. Process facilitators – those people who are formally trained and are experts in creative thinking process.
- B. Sponsors – those people who have interest in creativity and support the creativity projects.
- C. Creative members – Other people in an organization who have been trained in creative thinking.

Process facilitators are experienced in all creative thinking tools such as 'Edward de Bono Six Hats Methods', 'Lateral Thinking techniques' and the 'Thinking Tools.' They need to be skilled facilitators in facilitating team creativity and have thorough knowledge of all creative thinking skills. They are also good coaches and motivators as they act as a pool of facilitators. They support all creative teams and creative projects from other departments. Usually, I will train these facilitators as they play an active role in facilitating class activities and also workplace creative projects.

Sponsors who are usually represented by managers or team leaders are responsible for sifting through all creative ideas by employees and for approving any creative projects. They also need to understand the creative thinking process, the creative knowledge and how creative thinking can be used as a catalyst in organization change. This training can be done in one or two days during which all the managers will be exposed to creativity concepts, some creativity tools or lateral thinking tools and the process of formal creative session.

Creative members are all other employees in an organization that are trained in creativity and participate in creativity projects. They are encouraged to come up with creative ideas in improving the work process, new product development and new service level. They are informed on the structure, process and approach in generating ideas and how rewards are linked to their creative efforts.

These people need to be trained in using the creativity tools in participating in team and creativity projects. Usually I will spend two days in training for every module in creativity.



5.2.3 Rewards, Recognition & Appreciation

Everyone expects rewards, recognition & appreciation for good performance. The question is how these incentives should be related to bonuses or remuneration. Other issues are fairness and people perception. Are the rewards justified? Or Are the rewards attractive enough? Or Do the recipients deserve them? I would recommend that both individual and team reward be given and the reward should be clearly communicated. The criteria of evaluation are clearly defined and evaluated by a panel of respected judges. I believe rewards in various forms are necessary in motivating everyone to be creative.

Individual rewards should be given at different stages and be of different values. For example, when someone has an initial idea, he/she should be

rewarded a token value and when a sponsor accepts the idea, then the reward is increased. Subsequently, the rewards will be increased further when the idea is being accepted by the management and later on produce results. The team rewards promote cooperation and cohesiveness among team members. Team rewards should be of high value when every member is striving to be the top in creativity project. Every member should be credited for his or her effort and no one should be singled out to receive the reward.

The rewards can be in monetary or non-monetary form. Monetary rewards include cash, profit-sharing as a result of cost saving or innovation, increments from promotion, benefits in kind such as paid holidays. Non-monetary rewards are free time, more annual leave, education or free health memberships. Some individuals may prefer more cash and others may want more free time. Rewards should be flexible and the recipients should have a choice over the rewards. This will not only motivate the recipients but also make them feel satisfied and propel them to strive harder.

The sponsors and managers can be the judges for the rewards. The important thing is fairness and the recipients understanding on how their creative ideas are evaluated based on a set of criteria. In promoting creative thinking, suggestion is more important than solution. The criteria should focus on the ability to generate novel ideas as opposed to only practical ideas. In my opinion, other essential criteria are ability to generate wealth of ideas in contrast to quality of ideas; ability to explore in applying the creativity tools; discipline of focus; discipline of time; discipline of methods and also ability to capture ideas and treat these ideas into usable ideas.



5.3 What are the Supporting Pillars?



5.3.1 Management Commitment & Involvement

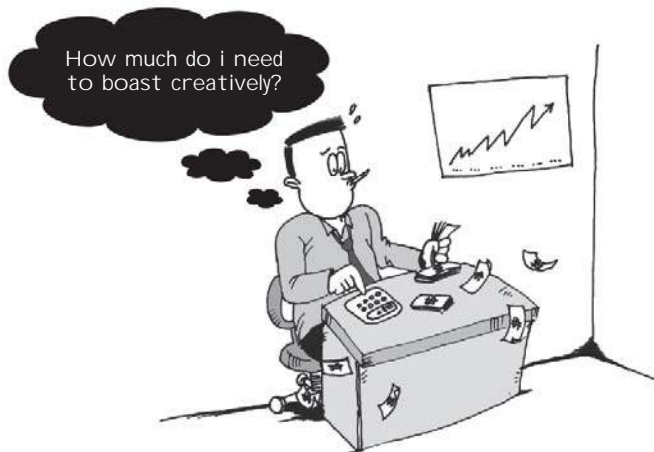
Management has an important role to play in determining whether an organization is creative or not. They have the authority and leverage to influence an organization to adopt creativity or otherwise. The management needs to allocate and approve budgets, allocate the necessarily resources, rewards for creative ideas, resolving cross boundaries conflict, coaching and mentoring, promoting and sharing of creative projects successes.

Take budgets for example. Senior managers will often understand the importance of creativity and how creative ideas change are able to lead to a better way of doing things. They may not take on the idea personally but they usually delegate to others to work on the promising ideas. The senior managers will usually set the criteria of funding, for example, to get the budget for creative training, idea generation sessions and creativity projects until commercialization of the ideas. In addition to these, their words and actions must be congruent – what senior management says and what senior management does – must be pointing in the same direction so that all the employees will sense their commitment and seriousness both from words and actions. They should not push too hard for immediate results and allow some time for explorations. This will in return delay any premature evaluation of ideas. They should allow time for creativity by allowing the employees time for creative training courses, and allowing them to work on creative projects both during office hours and off office hours.

As I mentioned earlier, cross boundary conflicts is another barrier in creating a creative organization. Interdepartmental communication, accessibility of information and interdisciplinary teams are some areas where the management should ensure these happen as many good ideas and creativity spark out over formal meetings and policies. To me, what is important is that the senior managers must fully understand the importance of idea generation sessions in between departments. If the employees' effort in creativity is recognized and contribute beneficially to their performance, then they will take actions to initiate activities such as working on a “special project” for someone else.

Another aspect where the management can play a role is coaching and mentoring. The senior managers, by virtue of the actions in coaching and mentoring leaders in creativity, the role models that they project, the praise they give,

send many positive indicators about what they value from their people. If the senior managers are sincere in promoting and sharing success, it is great as it will become visible and everyone in an organization will seek to emulate the best practices. These are even more powerful than merely creative statements in the corporate mission and vision. I remember there was an occasion when I was having a discussion with the General Manager of a large conglomerate, I pointed out the creative statements that were displayed prominently on his wall. He commented that the management has not done anything much with regards to creativity and perhaps have not sent out the right signals in advocating creativity and innovation. This is an example of the danger of non-commitment from the management despite the mission statement and the corporate promotion; they won't work.

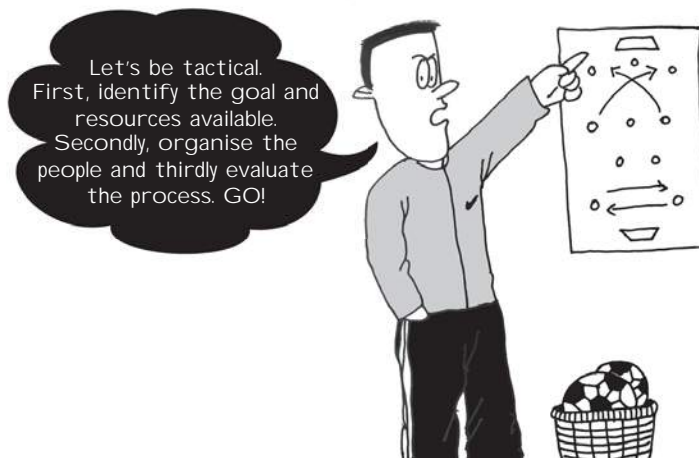


5.3.2 Budget and funding

We need to spend money in order to save money or to change the way we do things. Nothing is free and we must allocate budget for creativity sessions and projects. We also need to plan, predict and allocate budgets for every specific activity, for example, creativity training, sharing of information and creativity successes, idea generation and evaluation sessions, development of ideas and

implementation, rewards, incentives and creative process administration. How much we should allocate for these items very much depends on the scale of the items and the impact of the ideas to the cost bottom-line. To me, what is important is, there must be budget allocated no matter, as every manager knows that if it hasn't been budgeted for, it won't happen.

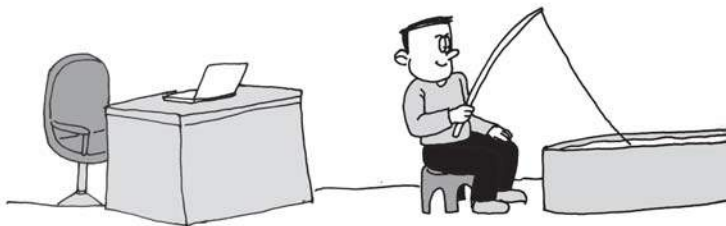
In project funding, it is important to make fast funding decisions. This funding can be made available at different levels depending on the scope and the level of risks involved. If the funding decision is fast, it will ensure that the idea is close to the originator and will minimize distortions and dilutions. From my experience, I would recommend a formal structure of funding where every department has a sum of money allocated for creativity projects. Some ideas fit well into a departmental goals and performance measures whereas others do not fit well as they relate to other departments or units. If there are readily creativity champions in each department, then they can aggressively develop the ideas. Nothing is more frustrating than the statement "We can't develop that idea as it concerns other department." Or "No one has time for that and our performance is not measured on that too." These thoughts must be borne in mind if an organization is committed to promote creativity and innovation culture.



5.3.3 Project management

Everyone in a creative organization should understand that creativity project is in addition to the line or daily operation work. Line or daily operation work is continuous and that is the reason why the person is employed to work. Creativity projects are one-off special activity where the people involved spend time to develop a feasible idea until it is implemented. All creativity projects have a finite timeline with a clear starting and ending point. Therefore in a good project management, every stage and task are measured and the necessary resources are allocated. Since the projects and daily operation work use the same resources, there will be conflicts because both work demand the same resources. Staffing is one of the most important and challenging things in project management since manpower is always limited. Hence, it is important to recognize the time spent in daily work as well as creativity project so that those people who are involved in projects can build their career progression simultaneously. As for the organization, it is essential to ensure that there is a back-up person for the creativity projects if someone falls out during the projects. The managers must also ensure that the people involved in the projects are rewarded accordingly once the projects are completed.

Other features in managing projects are defining a clear list of acceptance criteria because we may need to measure them against the key performance indicators. Continuous evaluations do not only highlight the weakness of the project but also provide the creativity committee with a comprehensive checklist and details of risk measurements and the pathway towards the end results. If the risk is too high and unacceptable to the committee, they can delay or postpone the project and reassess it again.



5.3.4 Managing the creative process and environment

The creative process, covers from idea generation until capturing and treating ideas into usable ideas and planning for actions. We need creativity champions and facilitators to support the structure. The champions should be somebody from the management level who has influence over the business decisions and the facilitators are those experts who have full information and knowledge about creative thinking. Usually, they are from the managers or the heads of departments. The key roles of managing the creative process are:

- a. To provide the platform and structure where everyone in an organization are supported from idea generation stage until implementation stage.
- b. To collect, distribute, monitor and follow-up on all ideas generated and the creativity projects through a systematic and structured process.
- c. To evaluate, review and reassess the ideas that are left out in order to determine if any should be given priority again in the specific conditions and circumstances.
- d. To serve as the central information database where all creative ideas are captured, recorded and validated. The information is then disseminated to others as necessary.
- e. To act as a coordinator in linking all the creativity projects in various departments and ensuring that the projects support the business goals and objectives.

In my opinion, what is most important is make it clear to all that everyone is responsible in creativity and in creating a creative organization. The creative process is merely to support the creative efforts and to provide the mechanism to make all this work.

As for the creative environment, I don't expect any organization to have fancy decorations, coloured walls, beanbags on the floors and with no tables and chairs. Some of these physical setting do encourage creative thinking, but most of the staff in my clients' office are well disciplined. The people in those creative

organizations are hard-working, willing to spend time to think and explore and willing to take risks to improve. The creative organizations must provide the necessary facilities, hardware and software and the time for their people to do their work. From my experience, time and space for creativity is important. The people have their own time for creativity and space where they can work without any interruption. Some argue that interesting ideas usually happen by chance interaction. For example, two people happen to bump into one another accidentally and have conversation that results in some interesting ideas. I believe that creative thinking is more than this and it needs deliberate efforts. Amongst others, Dr. de Bono's lateral thinking techniques do provide us with a list of systematic and deliberate steps in generating ideas rather than exhortations and by chance. The important point is to design an environment to encourage people to tap into other people's experiences and to explore the likelihood of having different people with different background working together.

Cafeteria, common corridors and meeting rooms are places where people meet frequently. Why not start to observe these places and ask ourselves whether there is anything we can do to encourage creativity. How about some bulletins board, creative slogans and even creative thinking tools diagrams?

Discussion Questions

1. What are the 3 main carrots that were discussed earlier in building a creative thinking culture in an organisation?
2. Select the carrots that would motivate your people to change their mindset and think more creatively. Give an example on how you would implement these ideas.
3. List down all the supporting pillars of a creative organisation as explained earlier.
4. Which pillars are more relevant to your organisation? Suggest a plan on how you intend to implement them in order to develop a strong creative culture among your people in the shortest possible time.

06

Approaches in Creating a Creative Organisation





6.1 Management Initiative Approach

Promoting creative ideas is important in a total quality environment. By encouraging everyone with a stake in the company (employees, supplier, and customers) to provide input to changes in processes, product, or service designs, and to suggest ideas for new products or services, the organization successfully extends its creative powers. When an organization develops and implements their creative outcomes, then they innovate. An organization's innovation is a reflection of the employee's creativity. A manufacturing employee's recommendation for reengineering part of his production line is an example of his creativity whereas the changes in product efficiency or quality resulting from implementation of his suggestions represent an innovation for the organization.

It is best to develop an organization vision, mission and strategies in line with the management initiative in promoting creativity. For example, in DuPont, the management recognizes that creativity provides the fuel essential for innovation. The Dupont Center for Creativity & Innovation was set up so that there is a formal group that could reach out across the business units, inspiring local champions to become actively involved in learning and applying creative thinking tools in achieving successful innovations. Their vision, mission and strategies are as below:

Vision:

DuPont is acknowledged as the most innovative company in the world through creativity of people.

Mission:

To catalyze the unleashing of the underutilized creative potential of our people, and to champion prompt implementation of best ideas to drive business success.

Strategies:

Primary focus of the Centre was:

- i. Education of employees in the techniques of creativity and innovation.
- ii. Application of the techniques to practical problems.
- iii. Helping line managers establish a Supportive Environment.

Besides the vision, mission and strategies statements, it is also important that the organization set up a formal resource center, creative thinking network and facilitators network and communication network.

A resources centre is established as a central place for disseminating information and communication. The centre is responsible for scheduling workshops, meetings, gatherings and creativity activities. Some centres publicize their offerings through brochures, directories and planners. Among others, these will include books, videos, list of workshops and training, list of process facilitators and process champions. In the centre, there should be space available for creative meetings, training rooms, and library and / or computer lab. The availability of these facilities varies in different organizations as they depend on

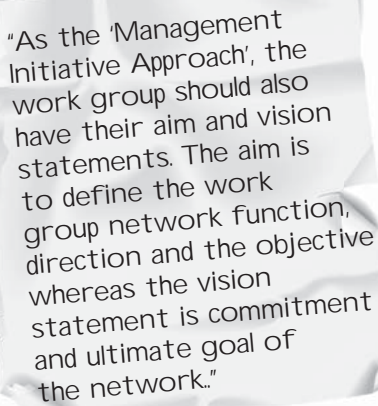
budgets and funding. I remember a Vice-President in a multi-international company responded to the employees' request in building a creativity centre. He allocated time & money for the employees and funded the creativity centre, which helps them in nurturing ideas and innovation

Another major initiative that is worth examining is to certify a group of facilitators to teach others. From my experience, it is useful and motivating if there is a system where a facilitator would move to different levels of competence. After a facilitator conducts or co-facilitates a number of training sessions, he / she will move to the "Master Facilitator" or "Expert Facilitator" level. Once the facilitator becomes a "Master Facilitator" or "Expert Facilitator", he / she is capable of leading training workshops independently.



6.2 Work Group Initiative Approach

The use of one level's theories as another's metaphors is not an invitation for methodological sloppiness; it can, however, lead to new insight and creativity via lateral thinking. On the other hand, when creativity is done in a group, then, divergent thought should take place in a group decision. In line with this, de Bono's, (1985) Six Thinking Hats method can be one way in which divergent ideas are surfaced. According to de Bono, suspension of thinking does not give rise to creativity; and that is the reason why he uses green hat thinking (creativity) to generate alternatives and possibilities.



"As the 'Management Initiative Approach', the work group should also have their aim and vision statements. The aim is to define the work group network function, direction and the objective whereas the vision statement is commitment and ultimate goal of the network."

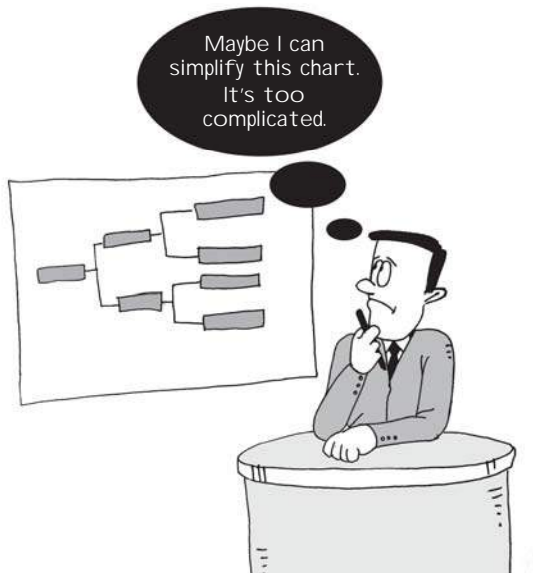
In this approach, it is important to establish a company-wide network of work groups who could share learning in creativity. Some of my client's organization organizes forum and lateral thinking gathering to raise awareness throughout the organization of the importance of creativity and innovation. These activities also provide a platform in sharing of learning as a result of participating in work groups and also to reward people for their creative ideas contributions.

In one of my client's company lateral gatherings, they discussed and reported innovations in various aspects. Among others are the innovations in new processes, new products, human resources, safety, customer satisfaction, information system and environmental control. The lateral initiative approach helps individuals from different departments and companies under the group in learning from one another.

Sometimes, a network of work groups is formed because of a strong commitment of renewal and growth among the employees. The network could also serve as a volunteer group of employees in an organization. The main objective is educating themselves and others in creative thinking and applying the learning to daily work practices. As the 'Management Initiative Approach', the

work group should also have their aim and vision statements. The aim is to define the work group network function, direction and the objective whereas the vision statement is commitment and ultimate goal of the network.

In the network, creative meetings are organized monthly or once a fortnight. I remember one of my client's companies organized a creative meeting where employees shared experiences, and told stories about innovation. If they have nothing to share, they will tell stories, play a game or tell a joke. It is recommended to keep the people's energy level high and the meeting fast-paced. At the end of the meeting, an appointed person keeps the minutes of the meeting. Usually, it is recommended that the same person writes the minutes in order to maintain discipline and responsibility. The network can also invite other business units or functions speakers or external creativity speakers to provide the employees with new ideas and thinking approaches. After all, the pooling of resources from across the company and outside is possible because the basic idea is for everyone to recognize the value of creative thinking and learn how to apply creativity tools in the workplace.

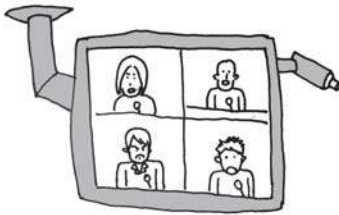


Discussion Questions

1. As you plan to develop your organization's vision, mission and strategies in line with your management's initiative in promoting creativity, what do you think is relevant to your organisation?
2. Suggest 2 ways on how you can create a creative organisation using the work group initiative approach.
3. What are the possible barriers and hindrances in your approach? Name 3 most critical barriers.
4. Think of 2 contingency plans to ensure your initiative to create a creative organisation is successful.

07

Evaluation of Creative Ideas as a Business Process



REAL TIME MONITORING



7.1 How Does Evaluation Happen in an Organization?

In general, evaluation of creative ideas means judging the value of the ideas whether they are good or bad. The question is how creative ideas are being evaluated in organizations, Are good ideas selected for further development and bad ideas rejected? In most cases, my experience tells me that evaluation usually is not carried out in an orderly and professional manner.

For example, while a company was reviewing their contract terms with suppliers, they discovered that the terms did not cover the suppliers' guarantee of product quality and on time delivery. If these terms were to be included into the contract terms then they might create unnecessarily red tapes, distrust, and undermine the business relationships. This will cause suppliers to withdraw before a tender is awarded and some will be disappointed with the strict control and accountability and will not cooperate in providing the quality reports.

During one of the meetings to discuss this matter, one junior staff says, "Why don't we exclude all the terms in the contract and ask the suppliers to list down their terms after we state our expectations? If the suppliers meet our expectations for three months, then we continue to use them and give them more business; if not, we look for other suppliers."

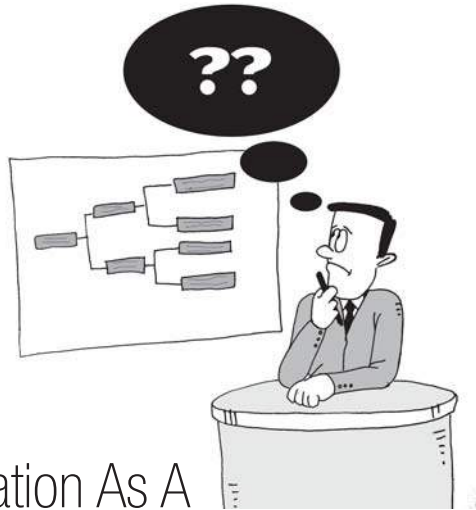
How would you react to this idea? I believe many people will resent this. Some may directly object such as "That's impossible or that's nuts." and others will shoot the ideas politely, for example, they may say, "This will only motivate the suppliers initially." Or "We will never be able to get rid of bad suppliers that fail to meet our expectations." Or some may even say, "We will be subjected to their terms instead of our terms." I'm sure the list is not exhaustive but the point is we always form immediate judgment as to whether the idea is good or bad. This is an evaluation process and it is not influenced by who makes the suggestion, or who feels threatened by the suggestion, or whether we like the person who made the suggestion, or whether it is within our authority to support, reject or to stay neutral about the idea? One thing for sure is that the person who suggests the

the idea will learn to be careful when and when not to give ideas. The organization will also lose out as it has set a negative thinking culture. If the staff feel they should not suggest ideas freely then the company will lose the opportunity to bring the idea forward for further development.

My experience is that we are influenced by all these constraints and limited resources in an organization. This will then influence our creative thinking and ability to generate radical ideas as they are controlled by personal emotions, other people's perceptions and organizational politics. We need to set a way that encourages people to continue to suggest ideas without intimidating and risking their position. There is a way that clearly determines how new ideas should be treated within those unavoidable constraints. I would say that the process should somehow or rather operate in the following environment:

- a. In a formal environment, creativity projects should be reviewed by a creative committee say in every two months and the outcome is approved for funding in stages. The committee must be represented by top management and departmental heads who have the leverage in business processes. The rejected projects or those that need rework are sent back to the project team for amendment.
- b. In an informal environment, the way is very much dependant on the work and organization culture. The culture either explicit or implied will send strong signals to the person who wants to suggest any new ideas. The person will know what to say, what is acceptable, and when it is safe to act. This is also an environment where the senior managers have the strongest influence in either encouraging or discouraging the person in creativity efforts.

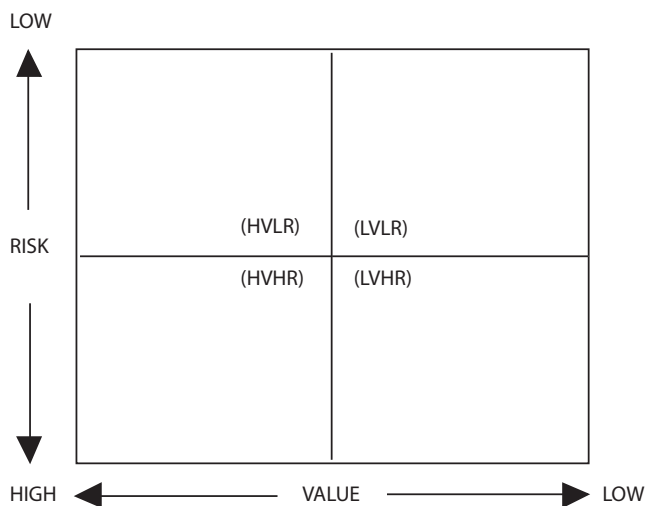
Good managers should know to build a creative thinking culture and balance between the contradictory approaches: a culture which is supportive to individual or team creativity and also the nature of business, organizational setting and levels of authority in evaluating the ideas. I will discuss how an organization should evaluate the creative ideas in the next chapter and how this can be done through some thinking tools and techniques.



7.2 Evaluation As A Business Process

Evaluation as a business process means deciding which idea to be accepted, rejected or needs further development. As all of us know, people who make decisions are subjected to different pressures of fear, politics, time, funds etc. In any business setting, making accurate and timely decision is of utmost importance. Evaluation in this sense means selecting the good ideas over those less good ones. I don't think we have the best ideas in making decisions as the ideas evolve over the times. Idea evaluation can be managed just as any other business system and some of the techniques and tools are as follows:





7.2.1 Evaluation Grid

One of the simple evaluation grids is based on two key elements i.e. the risk element and the value element. The two elements have high and low categories. The first quadrant is low in value but high in risk; the second quadrant is low in value and low in risk; the third quadrant is high in value but low in risk and the fourth quadrant is both high in value and risk.

Ideas offering low value and high risk should be kept in view or rejected. Sometimes it is useful to shelve the ideas temporarily as conditions and circumstances will change and make the ideas possible later. For example, the changes of business direction and new technologies might reduce the risk factors. Henceforth, it is important to review and reassess the ideas occasionally, perhaps twice yearly or once a year.

If the ideas are low value and low risk, we only spend time to develop and implement them when the overall portfolio provides a higher value than the risk factor. Many people might have kept the ideas away since the benefits are low. I know from experience, it is important to consider ideas that could offer continuous incremental improvements rather than looking only at high value ideas.

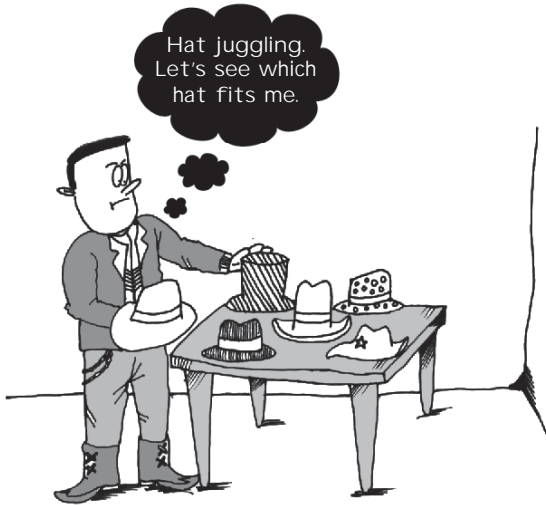
When a person is confident and motivated to generate more ideas, they will be able to come out with better ideas once he / she becomes skillful in creativity.

Ideas offering high value and low risk should be given the approval to implement as soon as possible. Some of these ideas are radical and others are incremental. The decision to select these ideas very much depends on the departmental and organization goals.

The last quadrant is very special as the ideas not only offer high value but also high risk. These ideas require further examination and evaluation, as they need more research efforts and most probably high investment. We usually analyse these ideas in great detail before we implement them. We can't make a decision now as there is not enough information and data to support the ideas.

The evaluation grid serves as a dynamic but simple way of categorizing ideas. There are no hard and fast rule in determining the value and the risk level. Some people might set some criteria before deciding which ideas are of high value or low value and high risk or low risk. The important point is how much efforts and time are required in gathering sufficient information before we can categorize the ideas in the relevant quadrant. Those ideas that provide high value and low risk should be implemented and others should be kept in view, analyse further or reject completely.





7.2.2 Six Thinking Hats and Six Action Shoes Evaluation

The Six Thinking Hats framework is a powerful tool for focused thinking in meetings and also has high value as an evaluation checklist in thinking about a subject. I have summarized the meaning of Six Hats in earlier chapters but as I now use them in evaluation context, my purpose is to use the six coloured hats in questioning the ideas for evaluation. We can examine an idea in a balanced and objective way from the perspective of Six Hats.

Yellow Hat (Benefits)

- What are the benefits of the ideas?
- What are the values as a result of successful implementation of the ideas?
- Who are the beneficiaries?
- How do the ideas benefit them directly and indirectly?
- How long will the ideas benefit them?
- What are the potential benefits of the ideas?

White Hat (Information)

- What is the information that we know with regards to the ideas?
What is the information that we need to find out before implementing the ideas?
How do we gather the relevant data?
Are the sources of information reliable?

Red Hat (Feelings)

- What are the feelings of those who are affected by the ideas?
What are their likely reactions during implementation of the ideas?
What can we do to manage these feelings?

Green Hat (Creativity)

- How do we overcome the weaknesses, lack of information and feelings, which arise as a result of implementing the ideas?
What are the possibilities in overcoming the issues?
Are there any other alternatives in these suggestions?

Blue Hat (Process Control)

- How can we manage this process of evaluation?
What are the hats that need to be used and how long should I spend on each hat?
Are we using the hats correctly as an evaluation tool for the ideas?

The Six Action Shoes developed by Dr. de Bono aims to teach people how to act and not just learn about description and analysis of information. In the real world, it involves action as well as knowledge. Dr. de Bono invented the word 'operacy', which is the skill of action. The framework of the Six Action Shoe is to help in both the training of action skills and in the use of these skills at the moment of action.

According to Dr. de Bono, "Be perfect and do the right things are instructions that are easy to give but have little practical value." He recommends breaking down action into six distinct modes, which gives specific guidance about the action that needs to be taken. For example, when we cook, we choose our ingredients. In action, we can choose our action style to fit the needs of the occasion.

Navy Formal Shoes (Routine, drills and formality)

- What are the routines and how can we carry through the routines perfectly?
Do we have flexibility in carrying out the routines?

Grey Sneakers (Collecting information and thinking about it)

- What information do we know that will help to clear up the ideas?
How can we collect the necessary information for the ideas?
Are we comprehensive and neutral in information collection?

Brown Brogues (Pragmatism and practicality)

- Are we doing what is relevant to the ideas?
Do we have clear objectives, priorities and values in implementing the ideas?
Do we select from our existing action patterns but are sensitive and respond to situations?

Orange Gumboots (Emergencies, crises and dangerous situations)

- What are the actions that we can take when situations are unstable, unpredictable, and likely to get worse?
Do we know what is to be done and who is doing what?
What is our contingency plan and considerations if the plan does not work according to expectation?

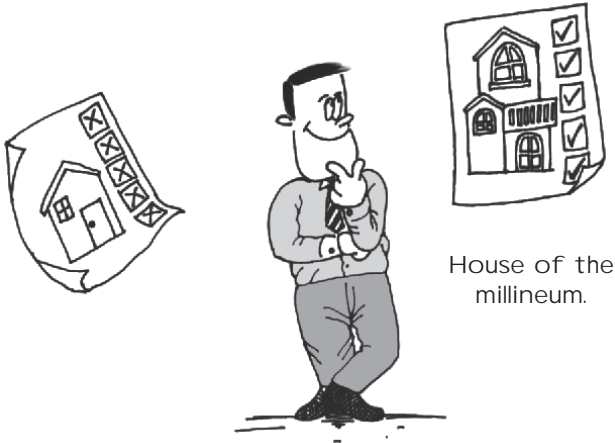
Pink Slippers (Human caring – with sympathy, compassion and help)

- Have we considered the people's feelings in implementing the ideas?
Do we listen and understand enough?
Do we act in a caring way?

Purple Riding Boots (Authority and playing out an official role)

- What are the appropriate actions that we can take in relation to the ideas?
Have we indicated that we are acting in an official capacity?
Are our actions consistent with our duties, obligations and expectations?

Please refer to the details in the book "Six Actions Shoes": Allscript publication. 2003



7.2.3 Decision Matrix

The evaluation tool is adapted from Dr. de Bono's Direct Attention Thinking Tools. In DATT, there is a tool call DOCA that stands for Decision/Design, Outcome, Channels, Action. This tool is used to look at the outcome of our thinking and the action steps that follow. The tool originally helps us to answer the questions:

- What are we going to do?
- How are we going to do?

In making decision using a decision grid, I usually lay out all the alternatives across the top of the grid. Then the positive and negative values are identified. Finally, the most important priorities are chosen. After the categories on the chart are in place, it is a simple matter to check each alternative and see how many priorities it satisfies. From my experience, it is important to define clearly and comprehensively the key values involved (K.V.I) and the first important priorities (FIP) that are used to evaluate the ideas. The positive values are things we want to have: excitement, status, security, recognition etc. The negative values are the

things we do not want to have: miscommunication, fear, risk, insecurity etc. As for the FIP tool, it is very important in narrowing down the list of criteria. There is an obvious overlap between FIP and K.V.I, because values are often priorities. But the two are not the same thing. The K.V.I feeds into FIP which determines the final list of priorities. FIP can also be used to narrow down the K.V.I. list of values.

" it is important to define clearly and comprehensively the key values involved (K.V.I) and the first important priorities (FIP) that are used to evaluate the ideas.

The FIP covers two types of priority:

1. Things that have to be done first. Like the need to wear socks before you put on your shoe
2. Things that are important. Like the need to buy a flight ticket that fits into your schedule.

To make the grid easier to read, treat the 'negative' values and priorities under 'escape.' So if "high expenditure" is a negative value in buying a PABX telephone system, put down "escape high expenditure" or "no high expenditure."

This allows you to put a simple tick in all the boxes where the alternative has that quality. So you just need to count the ticks to see which idea offers the most benefits. Sometimes, the users prefer to use 'Ratings' and 'Weighted Average' scoring in evaluating the ideas. This will give a more precise evaluation of the ideas against the key values and important priorities. On the chart below, the PABX telephone Brand E tallies highest with ten ticks.

" The K.V.I feeds into FIP which determines the final list of priorities. FIP can also be used to narrow down the K.V.I. list of values.

Decision Grid – Buying a PABX telephone system

Criteria		Brand B	Brand C	Brand D	Brand E	Brand F	Brand G
		Alternative / Ideas					
User friendly system	Positive Value	✓			✓		✓
Support future expansion			✓		✓		✓
Hi tech appearance				✓			✓
Integrate to existing computer system					✓		✓
Reliable brand		✓		✓	✓		✓
Reasonable pricing		✓			✓	✓	
No frequent maintenance						✓	✓
No high expenditure	Negative Value	✓			✓	✓	
No poor after sales service			✓	✓	✓		✓
No expensive parts							
No difficult features			✓				
Within the budget of ten (10) thousand	Positive Priorities	✓			✓	✓	
Support four lines and eighteen extensions		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Withstand market testing				✓			✓
No selection of colour	Negative Priorities	✓				✓	
No choice of expansion			✓		✓	✓	
No initial deposits			✓	✓		✓	

7.2.4 Six Medals Assessment

The six medals proposed by Dr. de Bono provide a perceptual symbol in a value scan. According to Dr. de Bono, the symbolism of the medals provides the 'anchor' to continuously remind us to focus our mind in value assessment. He illustrated that when we need some new ideas, it is more powerful to ask people for their "green hat" thinking than asking people for their ideas in general. The Six medals help us to separate the different types of values. The symbols also help

us to focus on one value at a time, which is more powerful and prevent our thinking to drift. We will be conscious when we are crossing boundaries and we can also stop others from drifting in their exploration of values.

The Six Value Medals framework provides a relevant metaphor that associates the medal & the values it indicates.

- a. **Gold Medal:** This medal deals with human values, the values that affect people. Gold is a superior material and human values are the most important values of all in the end. What are the human values here?
- b. **Silver Medal:** This medal focuses directly on organizational values. It is directly related to the purpose of the organization. There are also the values involved in the actual running of the organization.
- c. **Steel Medal:** These are the 'quality' values. Steel should be strong. The values are in the intended direction. What are the values of the product, service or function in terms of what it is trying to do?
- d. **Glass Medal:** This medal covers a number of associated values: innovation, simplicity and creativity. Glass is a very simple material originating in sand. When we apply creativity, we can do a lot of things.
- e. **Wood Medal:** These are the 'ecology' values in the broadest sense. What are the impact values on the environment, on the community, and on others? The values relate to those things and people not directly involved.
- f. **Brass Medal:** This medal deals explicitly with 'perceptual values'. How does this appear? How might it be seen? What are the brass values here? Perception is real even when it is not reality. Brass looks like gold.

This is just the overview of all the medals. The details are found in the book "The Assessments of Values & The Six Value Medals": Allscript publication. 2003.

Discussion Questions

1. Name a formal and informal situation where your organisation conducts a review on creativity projects or ideas.
2. Name the 6 action styles proposed by Dr. de Bono which gives specific guidance about the action that needs to be taken.
3. Suggest 3 most important priorities and key values that you would consider in assessing an idea to make your people more creative.
4. What are the 6 value medal assessments proposed by Dr. de Bono?
5. Imagine that you are assessing an idea you plan to implement. Use the 6 value medals to do this.

08

The Roles of Managers and Employees in Organization Creativity



When an organization decides to embark on creative thinking in the whole organization, it is recommended to appoint a group of people to map out the total creativity process. Some of the roles are Blue Hatters, Process Facilitators, Process Champion and Creative Committee.

TO BE CONFIRMED

8.1 Blue Hatter

A Blue Hatter is someone trained in Six Thinking Hats and other creativity / lateral thinking skills. This person is specially selected to solve key performance areas and drive other people to achieve results. Usually, the Blue Hatter still has a 'real' job and serves a team member or a part-time team leader. In some companies, I have trained a large group of their people to be Blue Hatters. The role of a Blue Hatter is to bring the new thinking concepts and creative ideas to the day-to-day activities of the business. Some senior and more experienced Blue Hatters lead, motivate and coach other team members and become experts in using the creativity tools and techniques or designing the thinking process.

In most successful creativity sessions, we need a strong Blue Hatter. Besides the creative thinking skills, the Blue Hatter must possess many skills, including problem-solving skills, leadership skills, the ability to collect and analyze data and also good management skills. In other words, the person must be

familiar with project management and allocation of resources in meeting the required deadlines.

It would be ideal to appoint a group of experienced Blue Hatters drawn from the rank of middle management to undertake some selected projects. People should view this position as an opportunity to career advancements and financial rewards. However, it is not compulsory and not even required in some companies. The appointed process facilitators can assume this role and work alongside a team assigned to a specific creative project.



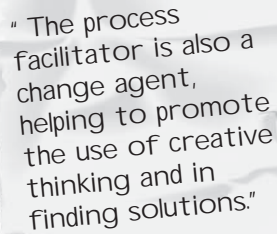
8.2 Creative Thinking Process Facilitator

In a creative thinking organization, the creative thinking process facilitator usually serves as a consultant and mentor to Blue Hatters working in a range of projects and thinking sessions. This group of facilitators is drawn from experts in management level or are potential managers who have vast experience in their own field.


The process facilitator is also a change agent, helping to promote the use of creative thinking and in finding solutions. The process facilitator may also have attended the training of trainer programme for the Blue Hatter and team members. They investigate the key performance indicators and study the business processes. For example, study on

how to meet customer delivery requirements and developing measurements for product quality. Their role as a process facilitator is also to ensure the Blue Hatter stay on track, reporting the work improvement progress. Another role played by the process facilitator is to act as an intermediary between process champion or management and the Blue Hatter. Part of the role is to assist in collecting the necessary data, communication between levels and departments and providing technical advice to the Blue Hatter.

In most of my client companies, those appointed as the process facilitators are experienced Blue Hatters and there are a few teams of process facilitators who continuously drive for improvements, changes and sustaining the momentum of creativity.



" The process facilitator is also a change agent, helping to promote the use of creative thinking and in finding solutions."



" They investigate the key performance indicators and study the business processes. "



8.3 Creative Thinking Process Champion

"The role of process champion is very important, usually a senior manager or a group of senior managers who ensure that the creative idea implemented is relevant and has impact to business bottom line."

In creativity efforts, we need a process champion called "Creative Thinking Process Champion" to initiate and support the process facilitator and the Blue Hatters / team leaders. The role of process champion is very important, usually a senior manager or a group of senior managers who ensure that the creative idea implemented is relevant and has impact to business bottom line.

The process champion is usually a member of creativity committee. Some of my client's companies call themselves "Lateral Thinking committee" and each committee will supervise one or more champions.



8.4 Creativity Committee

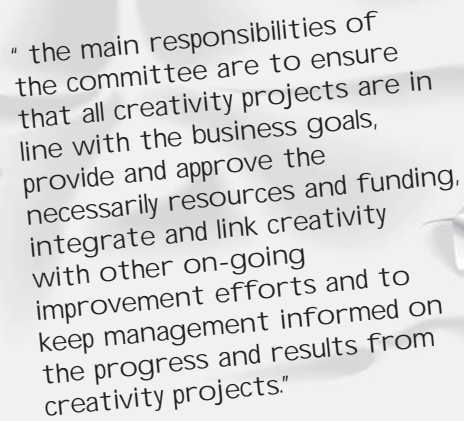
The creativity committee is led by an individual who manage and control the entire creativity effort in an organization. He or she is in the corporate level and holds a senior position. The ultimate goal is to drive Creativity Thinking and ensure that the habits are cascaded to everyone in the organization. Amongst others, the main responsibilities of the committee are to ensure that all creativity projects are in line with the business goals, provide and approve the necessarily resources and funding, integrate and link creativity with other on-going improvement efforts and to keep management informed on the progress and results from creativity projects.

Taking on a creativity role can be challenging and at times frightening for some people. Some of my clients admit that taking on these roles is time-consuming, as it takes up a lot of energy and efforts but generally most of them are satisfied with the results that they have achieved. After all, creativity and Creative Thinking is one of the cheapest investments as compared with other system implementation. From my experience, it is important to consider some of the following questions before your organization decide to take up the challenge.

- i. Who are the people involved in the creativity efforts?
- ii. Who are responsible to drive the entire creativity process?
- iii. What are the critical areas that need creative ideas?

- iv. What are the supports required for the creativity efforts?
- v. What advice is relevant and what are the types of training for the people?
- vi. What are the potential barriers in creativity efforts?
- vii. Where shall the creative teams start?
- viii. When shall we start with the training, projects and building a creative culture?
- ix. How long will the entire process be before results appear?
- x. How can we measure the creativity efforts?
- xi. How shall we reward the creative ideas and the creative projects?

Obviously, the answers to the above questions vary in different organizations but what is essential in my opinion is that whatever steps you take it must be aligned with the organization directions and is able to produce results. Soon, these efforts will be translated into dollars saved and values that you have created will enhance your services and products.



" the main responsibilities of the committee are to ensure that all creativity projects are in line with the business goals, provide and approve the necessarily resources and funding, integrate and link creativity with other on-going improvement efforts and to keep management informed on the progress and results from creativity projects."

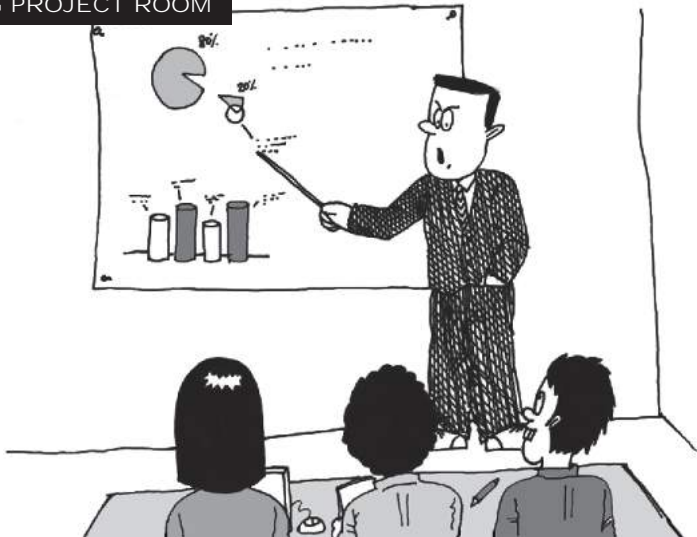
Discussion Questions

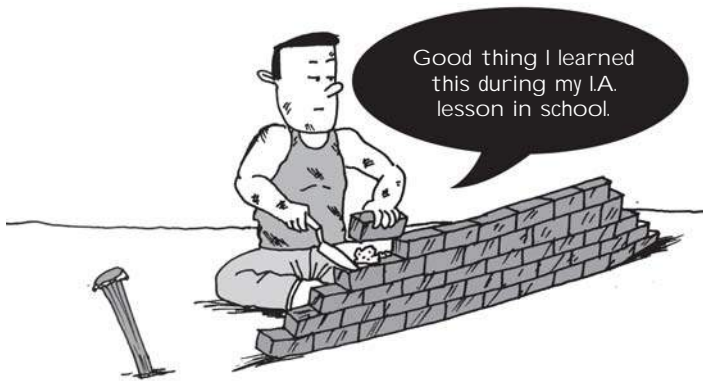
1. Who is a Blue Hatter?
2. Name the 2 key roles of a creative thinking process facilitator.
3. What is the key role of a creative thinking process champion?
4. Suggest who should be involved in the creative committee in your organisation.

09

The Roles of Managers and Employees in Creative Thinking Projects

THINKING PROJECT ROOM





9.1 What are the skills required?

The skills you require to successfully participate in the creative thinking projects are the two big items: Ability to apply the 'Creativity Tools' and lots of 'Motivation'.

1. Creativity Tools

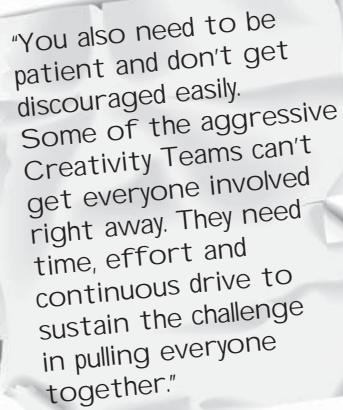
Being an expert in your own field, you will be able to generate ideas from your vast experience. However, years of experience will also set your mind to think in specific directions and you may find it difficult to break away from routines. In creativity, tools and techniques are essential to help us think outside the boundaries. There are many creativity techniques designed by so called experts and are readily available. Among these tools is Edward de Bono's 'Lateral Thinking', I discover that many people are not very good at defining the focus area and capturing the ideas after the idea generation stage. Although some might face difficulties in provocation and are unable to look for creative ideas at the beginning these people generally will be more creative after they are skilful in using those lateral thinking tools. For more details, please refer to the book "Serious Creativity" by Edward de Bono: Harper Collins publication. 1992

2. Motivation

To get started, the right attitude is important. I hope that in the lessons you've learned in 'Want To Stay Ahead?' you can feel the energy of creativity and sense of willingness we see in the companies in which creative thinking is

making an impact. Creativity training (the right one though) can be very interesting and challenging. It is also full of new ideas and tools that can help you to improve your daily work. Usually what is lacking is the motivation to pick up some of these tools in your daily life and work.

You should be willing to accept changes and challenges in life and at work. Adopting new procedures by implementing a new way of doing things is uneasy and difficult if you are comfortable with your current way. In addition, you should be willing to take risks, explore and have no fear of changes. If you look at this as a positive opportunity to improve on existing things, it has a much greater chance of success than if you apply creativity because you have to or is a directive from your boss.



"You also need to be patient and don't get discouraged easily. Some of the aggressive Creativity Teams can't get everyone involved right away. They need time, effort and continuous drive to sustain the challenge in pulling everyone together."

You also need to be patient and don't get discouraged easily. Some of the aggressive Creativity Teams can't get everyone involved right away. They need time, effort and continuous drive to sustain the challenge in pulling everyone together. As one of my clients says, "The more I am involved in creative thinking, the more I realize that it is not only in projects that I think creatively. It also helps me to improve the way I look at situations and I make better decisions. In business context, it helps me to see things from my customer viewpoints and the way I manage the business. Creative thinking has certainly made a profound impact in the way I do my work." In other words, you should be ready for continuous application and incorporate it into your working style and habits.



9.2 What are the challenges?

The staff that are involved in the day to day work are often the best people to improve the work process which is driven by top-down and/or bottom-up. In taking up the role you should consider the following challenges.

a. Accepting the role

Once your organization decides on building a creativity culture, it needs people who are able to contribute and are committed, so they look for people who have potential, are knowledgeable and talented. If you are invited to be a Blue Hatter or a Process Facilitator or a Process Champion in a particular project, then ask yourself these questions:-

1. Is the project sanctioned by the management or the creativity committee?
2. Is your team allowed to spend time during and after office hours in deliberating about creative thinking?
3. Is your work being taken over by others during the projects?
4. Do you have any influence and control over the projects?
5. Does your project align with what you or your department is currently working at?
6. Does your superior support and recognize your effort in participating in the project?

This list is exhaustive but the important point is you should see the great opportunity in participating in creative thinking sessions and recognise the way you can make an impact towards the business.

b. Attending a Creative Thinking Training.

There is no formal structure in creative thinking training. The training programmes can be a day, two days or up to five days. The key learning point is not only the awareness of creativity but also the skills in applying the creativity tools and methods. From my experience in conducting Dr. de Bono's creativity courses, I usually conduct two (2) day training for each module. The first module is introduction to creativity and 'Six Thinking Hats', the second module is perception and 'Thinking Tools' and the last module is the 'Lateral Thinking' application. There are breaks between the training; this allows the participants to digest and work on their project if any. My advice is go to training sessions with an open mind. It is interesting to note that those who have been participating in creativity training are amazed themselves at how much they can learn in every training session.

It is always more meaningful to work on a real project on your own or with a team than normal classroom activities. You may learn from other people in your team on in the class or the focus area in your team discussion. In summary, enjoy the creative thinking training and recognize it as one of the major steps in contributing towards building a creative culture.

c. Participate in Creativity Project

The first step in creativity is to identify the suitable focus area to work on. Once the focus area has been identified and approved by the 'Process Champion', the creative team will start to recruit the 'Blue Hatters' and gather the relevant information. When you are invited as a team member and become a 'Blue Hatter' you should give full cooperation and commitment to the team. If the focus area is important enough for the process champion or the creative committee to form a team, the area is important enough to improve. You may be the person who has experience in this area and your contribution is crucial in making the project more meaningful.

In participating in creativity project, you must remember some of the golden rules:

1. Ask questions if you don't understand the focus area, ideas generated or the data collected. Doing it wrong because you are confused or unclear will mean having to think up ideas all over again.
2. Learn from other members in your team. Be open to ideas and suggestions. If you have good ideas, speak up.
3. Record the thinking sessions and the thinking outcomes accurately. In many occasions, project teams fail to capture good ideas because of poor administration skills.
4. Be willing to explore and don't jump to conclusion. According to Dr. de Bono, delaying judgment is not a way in getting ideas but instead we should use 'Movement' technique – an active mental operation in which we move forward from a provocation statement to ideas generation. For more details, please refer to Edward de Bono book on 'Serious Creativity'; published by Harper Collins, 1992.

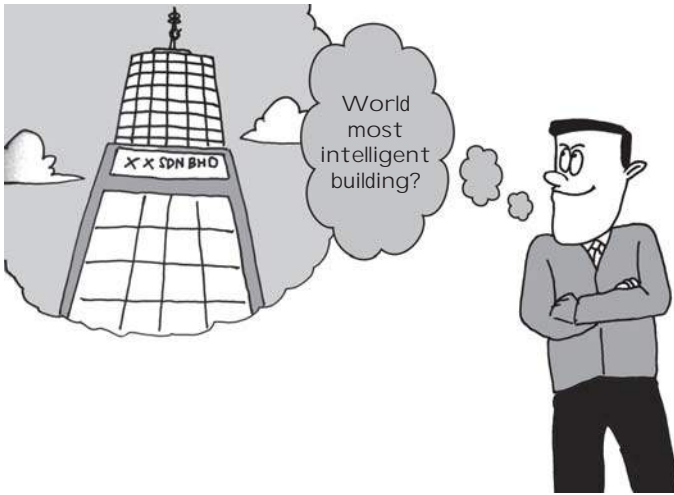
Discussion Questions

1. In your opinion, what are the 3 most important tools you need in managing a creative thinking project?
2. How would you plan to develop your thinking skills using the tools?
3. Name 2 challenges that you might face in a creative thinking project.
4. What would you propose to address those challenges?

10

What is your Next Step?





10.1 How Can You Build a Creative Thinking Organisation?

Despite the assumption of certain comments that the value and feeling dimension are important in building a creative thinking culture, lateral thinking has a significant impact in generating alternatives once the need of a marketplace or workplace is identified. If the ideas generated meet the need, then this is followed by formalization and company-wide practices. Company-wide practices mean building a common creative thinking habit among all the employees. Building a creative thinking culture requires effort from various departments, including both business units and support units. This effort requires the involvement of different people in different time frames. For example, this first time frame could be within weeks, followed by months, years or even decade. The types of people involvement are also influenced by either management initiative or work group initiative. Management initiative approach usually involve the corporate, business planning, marketing and financial department whereas in the work group initiative approach, the need is always triggered by operation, production, and quality issues.

From my experience, the three key elements require in building a creative thinking organization are: (1) Recognition of the need and nature of creativity (2) Application of the creative methods and (3) The creativity road map. Recognition provides the initial step towards creating new values. Application of creativity methods helps to generate creative ideas and the creativity road map provides the pathway for the creativity process in the organization. These elements are integrated and support one another in creating a creative organization. The effective introduction and application of creativity methods continually upgrade the road map. The road mapping process prepares the creative teams to effectively implement creativity activities.

" Building a creative thinking culture requires effort from various departments, including both business units and support units. This effort requires the involvement of different people in different time frames.

Recognition of the need and nature of creativity

Recognition provides the initial step towards creating new values. Application of creativity methods helps to generate creative ideas and the creativity road map provides the pathway for the creativity process in the organization. These elements are integrated and support one another in creating a creative organization.

Organizations have to recognize the need of creativity. According to Dr. de Bono, information and competence will become commodities. Creativity is essential in order to create new values and all forward thinking organizations should realize that creativity is one of the most important ingredients in business competition. Furthermore, in any self-organizing information system, such as the human mind, there is a mathematical need for creativity. Our brain forms patterns and tracks, which govern our actions and make our daily life possible but it is designed

to be uncreative. We need to use deliberate creativity tools (lateral thinking), idea collection process and focus thinking framework (six thinking hats) to move from a concern with “what is” (measuring tendencies and abilities) to “what can be” (training in methods and skills). A man can learn how to play golf and outpace a man without any formal training.

Once management accepts the importance of creativity, the company needs to set up creative teams and a creative structure or system. As discussed earlier, a creative team is formed to plan and carry out all the tasks to introduce creativity to training and application. It is important to ensure that the creative team includes the right people in dealing with the different tasks. Hence, it is recommended to gather people with different styles of thinking and experiences. It is also important to maintain an internal structure within the teams to ensure consistency in coordination of activities.

For example, one of my client's companies, which deals with life and general insurance had a vision for new marketing strategies and the breakthrough occurred in a creative session where the company changes the way in accepting enquiries through online internet and 'SMS' from mobile phones. A task force was formed. It coordinates the total creative idea and has well -defined roles and responsibilities for each team member. One team is to look into the promotion aspects that include public exposures, advertisements and awareness. Another team specializes in preparing the technical aspect of online system and the “SMS” facility. The support team provides the implementation. The training unit conducts briefing to frontline customer service and the legal and administration unit drafts the necessary legal forms and procedures. Each individual team member is assigned to see that the effort of the support team is systematically integrated into the overall effort.

Application of the creative methods

Real and practical application of creative tools and methods are necessary to take up the ideas after creative teams and structures are formed. As discussed earlier, application of creative methods requires on-going support, resources, guidance and rewards to move forward. There is no short cut but only practising of the tools and 'hands -on' experience in creativity process. From my experience, there are some importance rules to follow in using the creative methods:

1. Encourage creativity in general areas, not only in solving problems.
2. Encourage ideas in using the creativity methods
3. Be clear of your focus and objectives.
4. Integrate all creativity methods and make them work.
5. Be systematic and structured in the thinking process.
6. Challenge the status quo and our current thinking.
7. Invite ideas from our discipline and functions.
8. Reward yourself and others for best ideas.
9. Be disciplined in applying the 'creativity method.'
10. Be disciplined in management of time.
11. Keep the thinking methods simple and practical.
12. Be confident and supportive of others' ideas.
13. Don't criticize and condemn.
14. Jumping out from the boundaries and try new things.
15. Think of changes that will or would take place.

This is just some highlight on the application of the creativity methods. The details are found in the book "Edward de Bono Methods – Applications in MALAY-SIA Context": Edward de Bono Sdn Bhd publication. 2002

At times, one person can control all the application of the creativity tools and have the authority needed in generating ideas particularly the small scale innovation. However, there are many situations, especially in large organizations, where one person simply does not have the capability or authority to fully explore the creativity methods. I have also discovered that creativity exercise needs a lot of people involvement linking the operational issues and the creativity projects. There must be a linkage that enables the team and the employees together to drive the creativity forward.

Creativity Road Map

The creativity road map is the structured path that drives the entire creativity process. The road map should be developed at the early stage to inform the teams on what tasks to be completed and what resources are required.

Beside this, the road map also ensures that everyone in the creative teams devotes his energy to creativity and is focused.

In building the road map, it includes a framework of the steps and resources allocated systematically for all the identified focused areas. The framework provides a clear direction for the creative teams to effectively deal with the creative projects and implement the projects successfully. The map must be reviewed continuously and updated to accept any unexpected changes so that the map is relevant in a particular situation.

The three elements must be integrated and in place for successful implementation of the entire creative process. Sometimes, the emphasis in each of the elements changes as the process progresses.

1. The efforts in building a creative thinking organization will fail if the management do not realize the importance of creativity or take creativity for granted.
2. The creative teams may be actively using the creativity tools and facilitating creative projects, but without a clear road map, the issues may not relate and link to organizational goals.
3. A clear and comprehensive road map will not transform an innovative workforce unless everyone in the organization accepts the need for creativity and is trained on how to apply the creativity tools.

When all the three elements are in place and running smoothly, then the effort in building a creative thinking workforce is faster and worthwhile.



10.2 How can you develop a beautiful mind?

In one of Dr. de Bono's latest books, he says that a beautiful face ages and grows old. A beautiful mind does not age and, in fact, can become ever more beautiful. In his book, he explained that a beautiful mind means a mind that is attractive to others as well as to the individual. It is a beautiful mind in action. The action is not that of solving a complex problem but the action of exploring a subject in discussion and conversation. It is in this context that others see how beautiful the mind can be.

The question is can we develop a beautiful mind? According to Dr. de Bono the answer is 'yes'. He says that there are people who believe that intelligence and thinking are the same thing. They also believe that all highly intelligent people are good thinkers and if people are not so intelligent they cannot be good thinkers. The belief is totally false. Dr. de Bono explained the difference between thinking and intelligence. He uses the analogy of a car; intelligence is like the horsepower of a car and intelligence is the potential of the mind. A skilful driver will be able to maximize the performance of the car and not only depend on the

power of the engine. Intelligence is a potential and thinking is the skill with which that intelligence is used.

Universities are good at encouraging the habits of analysis and argument, which are indeed useful. However, in real life some ninety percent of the errors in thinking are errors of perception and error of logic is rare. He added that there is also a need to be constructive. We can analyze the past but we need to design the future. We need to put things together to create value. Being highly-educated does not itself give you a beautiful mind. In fact, we can become over fond of unnecessary complexity and argument.

My purpose in writing this chapter is to point out the value of a beautiful mind and how we can use our mind to make it beautiful to others and to ourselves. From my years of training and consulting in creativity, I would recommend that an organization focus their energy in developing the employees' mind. Just as in sports, thinking should be enjoyable and when the employees practice using their mind, they can build up their thinking skills towards a beautiful mind. To stay ahead in business and competition, we not only have to keep up with the race but we need to think one step ahead all the time. In these instances, we have to learn how to enjoy thinking and coming up with new ideas.

I remember reading somewhere about how the popular crayon was named. Joseph W. Binney founded The Peekskill (New York) Chemical Company in 1864 to sell colour-based products. In 1903, the company produced its first box of crayons. Binney's daughter-in-law was asked to name the newly designed green and yellow box. She combined the French word for chalk or stick of colour, craie, and added the suffix ola, shortened from oleaginous (oily). Americans would know Binney & Smith's "oily chalk colour stick" by its beloved name: CRAYOLA. I think it is a beautiful name.

This is just an overview and the details are found in the book "How to have a Beautiful Mind": Allscript publication. 2003

Organisational Creativity Factors (OCF) Instrument

I have developed an instrument that can accurately measure a number of organisational factors influencing creative thinking culture in organisations. Since there is a substantial list of creativity tests, the number of tests in existence makes it necessary to narrow down instruments specifically referring to creativity.

“Organisational Creativity Factors (OCF)” was developed based on the research and the experience gained through numerous creativity training and consulting assignments that I had conducted. Organisational creativity factors were measured for the purpose of assessing the practice of lateral thinking. A number of important factors must be present within an organisation for its work environment to support individual creativity and employees with strong creative potential are more likely to actually practice creativity when they receive strong support from the organisation. OCF was used to measure the samples according to five (5) key variables namely, creativity mechanism, creativity training, idea development process, idea implementation process and idea assessment process. It has a forty-two (42) item self report, likert-scale questionnaires which measure the factors that influence organizational creativity. The OCF was based upon the results of interdisciplinary research on the specialized organization culture and change management.

1. Creativity Mechanism

- To what extent did your company devote significant resources to the activities that facilitate creative thinking skills.

2. Creativity Training

- To what extent did your company adopt the approaches of creativity training.

3. Idea Development Process

- To what extent did your company use the processes to develop new ideas generated.

4. **Idea Implementation Process**

- To what extent did your company use the processes to implement new ideas generated.

5. **Idea Assessment Process**

- To what extent did your company assess every idea generated.

The instrument has been constructed in a way where each item requires the respondent to determine the extent of organization creativity approach practiced in the organization. Each statement of the five (5) parts is measured on a common scale continuum of 1 to 10 ranging from “1” representing “strongly disagreed” to “10” representing “strongly agreed” (See Appendix A, for the questionnaire).

APPENDIX A

ORGANISATIONAL CREATIVITY FACTORS (OCF) QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS

In this assessment, your ratings should be based on your personal experience and opinions. Please read carefully each instruction and statement given. Answer the statements carefully about the current organizational context and not the way it was or might be.

The following statements describe creative cultural characteristics of an organization. These statements reflect specific beliefs, behaviours and assumption in 5 distinct disciplines that affect creativity and innovation in an organization.

Be sure to answer as honestly and accurately as much as possible.

THANK YOU

ORGANISATIONAL CREATIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE (OC)

Creativity Mechanism

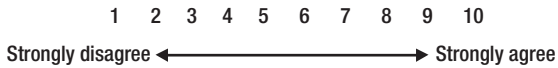
Please indicate to what extent the following mechanism played a significant role in helping your organization to earmark high priority challenges and opportunities for creativity and innovation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly disagree ←————→ Strongly agree

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------------------|
| 1. | We always emphasise on high priority challenges and opportunities to be addressed. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. | We always allow the employees to identify the creative 'hit list' (list of priorities). | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. | We always communicate creativity needs to all levels of the Organization. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. | We create culture in order to promote creative thinking. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. | We expressly rewards every suggestions / ideas of new challenges and opportunities. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 6. | We expressly rewards every exploration of new challenges and opportunities. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 7. | We consistently encourage individual creativity. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 8. | We consistently encourage team creativity. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 9. | We effectively encourage creativity projects among employees. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 10. | I personally have creativity focus of my work challenges that need solutions. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

Creativity Training

Please indicate to what extent did your company devote significant resources to the following activities that might facilitate creative thinking and creativity skills development? Please indicate your response based on the scale given in the box. Circle your answer.



- | | | |
|----|---|----------------------|
| 1. | We provide internal training in creativity and creative thinking skills. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. | We always send employees to participant in creative thinking training. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. | We always conduct idea generation sessions at all the levels of the organisation. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. | Our culture regards creativity and creative thinking as an important skill | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. | We continuously promote creative thinking training among employees | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 6. | We always reward employees for taking initiative in conducting creative training. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 7. | We consistently encourage staff to lead creativity projects after their training in the organization. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 8. | I personally participate in some creative thinking training on a regular basis. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

Idea Development Process

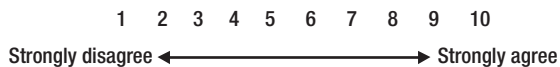
The following ways are the approaches of idea development process. Please indicate to what extent the company adopts these approaches. Circle your answer.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly disagree ←————→ Strongly agree

- | | | |
|----|---|----------------------|
| 1. | We have a structured (systematic) approach in for developing new ideas. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. | We always develop new ideas for continuous improvements. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. | We are able to produce new ideas as and when require. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. | Our culture regards idea generation as a core business practice. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. | We continuously develop different ways of capturing ideas | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 6. | We consistently reward idea development. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 7. | We incorporate idea-generating process in daily activities. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 8. | I personally develop new ideas on a regular basis. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

Idea Implementation Process

To what extent did you use the following process to implement new ideas generated. Please circle your answer.



- | | | |
|----|---|----------------------|
| 1. | We have structured (systematic) steps in implementing new ideas. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. | We always conduct trial run before implementing all new ideas. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. | Our implementation roles and responsibilities are clearly spelled out. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. | Our culture recognise idea implementation planning to be a core part of innovation. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. | We continuously review our implementation process when launching new ideas. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 6. | We consistently reward every idea that has been successfully implemented. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 7. | We allocate resources for implementing new ideas. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 8. | I personally use structured (systematic) steps in implementing ideas. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

Idea Assessment Process

Referring to your most recent idea assessment process, please indicate your response to the following statement.
Circle your answer.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly disagree ←————→ Strongly agree

1. We have a deliberate and structured (systematic) process for thoroughly assessment of new ideas. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. We always assess all new ideas generated. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. We are able to extract the concepts (key purposes) of new ideas for effective implementation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Our culture recognises idea assessment as a core practice. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. We periodically assess ideas effectiveness throughout the Implementation process. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
1. We consistently reward thorough assessment of new ideas and concepts. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. We incorporate idea-assessment process in all creativity projects . 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. I personally use a deliberate and structured (systematic) process for thoroughly assessment of new ideas. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Want to Stay Ahead – How to Create a Creative Thinking Organisation is

written based on the author's experience in helping organization in creating a creative and innovative organisation. In transforming a creative and innovative workforce, it is not enough to learn creative thinking skills individually. Everyone in an organization must contribute to this creativity transformation. In this book, you will learn how to stay ahead, including the explanation in the following aspects:

- Staying Ahead through Creative Thinking
- Transformation into a Creative Workforce
- Edward de Bono Creative Thinking Methods in Organisations
- How to Cultivate a Creative Organisation in Practice
- Approaches in Creating a Creative Organisation
- Evaluation of Creative Ideas as a Business Process
- The Roles of Managers and Employees in Organization Creativity
- The Roles of Managers and Employees in Creative Thinking Projects

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About the Author

Alex Ow, is the Managing Director of '**IRS Training**', which is a training & consulting practice in Dr. de Bono's Methods in Malaysia. He is the first independent consultant to be accredited for all of Dr de Bono's training programmes and was acknowledged as an active and successful de Bono instructor. He also started the Creative User Circle (Malaysia) – CUC, a network to pool all de Bono's graduates together and to promote & share creativity.

He has more than 16 years of extensive training and consulting experience in helping corporations to transform their innovative workforce.

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Alex Ow

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