

## Business Matters - creativity

### Overcoming Barriers to Creative Thinking

- ◆ **Self imposed barriers.** These can be imposed on ourselves consciously or unconsciously. They are particularly difficult to recognise but relatively easy to correct.

*Try asking yourself – what would be an ‘out of the box’ solution; what would xx do? Try brainstorming different ideas – follow the brainstorming rules – nothing is too outrageous to go on the list. Talk to others, particularly people who you think are creative, and get insights into how they think through problems.*

- ◆ **Patterns or belief in one unique answer.** Much of our training is how to establish a pattern or find one right answer. This is difficult to break as we are trained to seek an answer to a problem.

*Try thinking of more than one answer to everything. When you select your preferred solution check this against personal norms – was it predictable that you would choose this solution?*

- ◆ **Conformity.** Many people feel they have to conform to the patterns established by colleagues or their social circle.

*Try thinking – ‘what would be totally outrageous to my colleagues, my manager, the company, my network, my friends?’ If you do come up with a radical or different idea think carefully about how you introduce it – using good process, stakeholder identification and different influencing techniques mean that you can ease in a solution that might otherwise be rejected*

- ◆ **Not challenging the obvious.** It can be tempting to find and use the most obvious answer as there is a lot of effort required to challenging the obvious solution.

*To solve this problem try putting ideas on hold for a day or two and then reviewing them.*

- ◆ **Analytical thinking.** Analytical thinking has its strengths and makes a contribution. Relying, however, solely on this is a block to more conceptual or creative thinking.

*Try to consciously think broadly and long term – even if you use analytical thinking to do this. Practice with mind maps and other visual tools that encourage non linear thinking. Try the paradigm question: “What is impossible to do right now but if you could do it would fundamentally change your business/project/etc”?*

- ◆ **Evaluating too quickly.** Evaluation of an idea is instinctive when ideas are put forward, however, doing it too quickly can eliminate possible solutions or areas of thought at an early stage.

*If your inclination is to say ‘this won’t work’ try instead to say ‘this will work if we do xx’ or ‘what would be the benefit if it did work’.*

- ◆ **Fear of looking foolish.** This is something everyone worries about.

*Experiment with people you trust and are comfortable with. Tell some colleagues that you are consciously trying to be more creative and so will be making more ‘out there’ suggestions. If you prepare your environment it feels safer and you are more likely to take risks.*

- ◆ **Cynicism and negativity.** This will prevent people wanting or trying to put new ideas forward. Not only will this curb your own creative thinking but that of everyone around you.

*If you find you have tendencies in this way – try disciplining yourself to always think of one good thing about an idea BEFORE voicing any critique. Humour can also often unwittingly appear cynical or negative, or intimidate others – this about how you use yours; and from time to time adjust it according to the needs of the people you are with.*

#### Inspiration encouragement:

That sounds interesting, tell me more ...                      That sounds interesting, let’s try it ...

I have never thought of it like that, thanks ...

It sounds off the wall, but I wonder how we can make it work ...                      etc .....

We hear a lot about creativity & innovation. We hear a lot about individuals who are creative and innovative. It can sometimes be quite intimidating.

One of the first steps to increasing creativity is to understand the barriers and take steps to overcome them. Not everyone has the same natural creativity but we all have the ability to learn and as they say, practice makes perfect.

This ‘one minute guide’ on overcoming the barriers to creativity gives examples of the main blockers and ideas on how to overcome them. Try them out for yourself, practice them on others, and share them with others. Have fun, and try something a bit different!