Creativity as a Business Tool

Excerpts from the forthcoming ebook series

by Derek Cheshire

Creative Quotes

“If you see someone doing the impossible, don’t interrupt them.”
(Amar Bose, Bose Corporation)

“Space is not remote. You can get there in an hour if you can make your car travel vertically.”
(Fred Hoyle, astronomer)

“I rang the local builder and said ‘I want a skip outside my house’. He said 'I'm not stopping you.”
(Tommy Cooper, comedian)

“Don’t spend time beating on a wall, hoping to transform it into a door.”
(Coco Chanel, designer)

“I took a speed reading course and read ‘War and Peace’ in twenty minutes. It’s about Russia.”
(Woody Allen, comedian)

“Those who say it can’t be done are being passed by those who are doing it.”
(Unknown)

“Either you’ll learn to acquire and cultivate creative people, or you’ll be eaten alive”
(Leon Royer, Executive Director 3M)

“Hallo Rabbit,” he said, “is that you?” “Let’s pretend it isn’t,” said Rabbit, “and see what happens.”
(Winnie-the-Pooh, bear and explorer)

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Chapter 1

Solving Problems Creatively

Creative problem solving works by splitting the thinking about a problem into a series of stages. Many gurus talk in terms of three main stages: an initial exploratory phase where one identifies the problem to work on and considers it from different angles; a second phase where one considers alternative ways of dealing with the problem; and a third phase where one works out the detailed implementation of a chosen way forward. Within each of these three phases it is common to encourage an imaginative phase where different acts and possibilities are considered, followed by an evaluative phase where these possibilities are considered and a way forward is chosen. So you can think of the problem-solving process as follows:

Stage 1: Explore problem	Open up (diverge): Explore different angles Close down (converge): Select key problem
Stage 2: Generate ideas	Open up (diverge): Consider alternatives Close down (converge): Select preferred option
Stage 3: Implement plan	Open up (diverge): Plan supporting action Close down (converge): Undertake action

Since the whole process is itself an expansive opening out of new actions, it needs its own overall evaluation phase as well- in effect a fourth stage:

Stage 4: Evaluate	Open up (diverge): Monitor progress Close down (converge): Adapt action

How much time you spend on each phase depends on the nature of the problem; a problem you were unclear about probably warrants more time in the exploration stage whereas something more straightforward may merit more time in the idea generation stage. If the issue is likely to generate conflict then the implementation stage is likely to be worth considerable attention.

Set out this way the procedure seems very rigid; in practice it is much more relaxed and iterative. If, for example, during the idea generation stage you suddenly realize that really some other problem is the one you should be addressing, go back to square one for another round of clarifying and exploring the nature of this problem; then return to generate and consider possible courses of action for this reformulated problem. Problem solving should be very practical and end up with a plan that feels appropriate and that the problem owner is willing to implement. If after selecting a plan of action you realize that in fact you are not prepared to implement it, then treat that as a useful insight and go back and consider others until you find the best one that you are willing to implement.

One reason for problems is that people often think too narrowly, in mental tramlines born of habits worn into the brain's patterns of thought over time. If you precede a closing down phase by an attempt to consider the problem, solution or plan of action from various perspectives you force the mind to go beyond its usual assumptions. From these different vantage points it may jump to a more appropriate response to the problem. The opening up phase in each stage may help people who are particularly prone to premature evaluation of possibilities.

People prone to the opposite tendency of 'castles in the air' thinking may benefit from the discipline of the closing down phases. The action-planning phase often helps the vague-minded to commit themselves to a concrete action. As you get more practised you will speed up and become better able to judge which techniques to use when and the different stages and phases may become collapsed together. The procedure may eventually be replaced by a mental framework that serves the same purpose.

In our workshops you are likely to work through a series of problem exploration, idea generation and action planning techniques similar to those discussed below.

Problem exploration

Work in a small group - perhaps 3-4 of you. Each of you proposes a problem for which you would be 'client' and the group would be 'helpers'. Any kind of open problem will do, where there is more than one possible answer; e.g. how to improve, reduce, alter, change x; find a new way to y; or introduce or persuade z. Choose a problem that is important to you; don't invent a problem for the sake of it. You could address a problem thrown up by a current crisis, or what is sometimes called a constructed problem, where one compares the present to a hypothetical future. Let the group clarify anything they need to be clearer about, for each of the potential client's problems. Then the group decides which problem to work on.

Most problems, issues and possibilities merit some degree of clarification, etc., but how much depends on the importance and type of problem. If you are clear about the nature of the problem it may be sufficient to formulate a clear statement encapsulating the nature of the problem before starting to think about possible solutions. If the problem is altogether larger, perhaps something you will be working on for months or something you are not too clear about, or if it is an apparently clear problem embedded in a messy or politically sensitive context, then it is usually worth undertaking a more far reaching exploration, reformulation, or clarification exercise such as mapping out the possible components. The aim is to force you to consider all the pertinent issues and some of the relationships between them before trying to define which aspect of the problem you wish to attend to.

After reframing or mapping exercises, people often decide that the problem they originally intended to address is not the crux of the matter and proceed to look for solutions to a different issue from the one first raised. The four simple techniques described below are useful ways to try exploring and reframing a problem area.

Clarification

'Why?' technique

One way of probing into a problem area is simply to ask repeatedly: 'Why does X happen, and why do the things that cause X themselves happen?' Or you can look at consequences rather than causes by asking: 'Why is this a problem for you?' or simply: 'So what?' Repeated use of such questions usually produces deeper thought about a topic, pushing the boundaries wider and/ or into areas of personal values and ethics.

There are two important variants for either cause or consequence questions:

(a) 'And why else does X happen (why else is it a problem)?' This tries to extend the range of immediate causes or consequences.

(b) 'And why does X^1 happen (why is X^1 a problem for you)?' where X^1 is whatever was the cause of X. This probes for causes or consequences at one remove.

You can repeat these two types of question for any of the causes, the causes of causes, etc. However, five or ten questions are often sufficient to get some feel for the network of causes or consequences involved, and to gently push the client into considering assumptions and connections that would not have been examined otherwise. If used as a more protracted exercise, it shades into cognitive mapping.

Other people's definitions

This is a form of reframing. That is, it is a way to look at the problem from different angles. Doing this tends to challenge and bring to the surface previously unquestioned assumptions. Once you become aware of these, you can often see ways forward that were previously 'invisible'.

Other people are excellent sources of alternative viewpoints. A useful procedure is as follows:

1. Client presents problem and context briefly and writes up on the flip-chart his or her attempt to summarize the nub of the problem, using the form 'How can I or we ... ?' or 'How to ... '.

2. The helpers ask the client any questions for clarification that occur to them, but avoid proposing solutions, offering explanations or making judgements.

3. The client answers the questions factually, and avoids making any justifications or defences.

4. After a period of questioning, each member of the group (client and helpers) writes down privately their own attempts at expressing the nub of the problem in the same 'How can If How to' format. Helpers should err on the side of being provocative in their versions - e.g. expressing what they have 'read between the lines' as well as what the client has told them.

5. When all are ready, they are written up on the flip-chart, explained and discussed.

6. Finally the client chooses or creates a final version in the light of the other versions and the discussion. *The client has the last word*!

Notice that the helpers are effectively acting as consultants, and their task is not to decide how they would tackle the problem, but to help the client settle on a perspective that is most helpful to her or him. Since the client has the last word, carefully phrased suggestions that are sensitive to the client's focus are likely to be more productive and persuasive. Dialectical approaches illustrate some more powerful ways of using other people's viewpoints.

Dropping a key phrase

Often the key words or phrases in a problem statement are terms that are part of the conventional language of people in their profession. As such they often have a routine set of associations that may be constraining their

thinking. So try identifying the key words or phrases and try paraphrasing them in very different language. It often pays to work on one key phrase at a time, so that your rewrite of the statement is identical to the original except that one key phrase has been replaced. This contrast between the new phrase and the surrounding original wording often heightens the reframe. Obviously all parties (the client in particular) have to be prepared to give these alternative formulations serious consideration if it is to become more than a paper exercise.

Multiple redefinitions

This exercise can be done privately. The sentences below may be used as a means of opening up perspectives on the issue at hand. Think of your problem as a question and write it down in a few words. Then complete each of the following sentences:

- What I'd really like to do is ...
- If I could break all the rules of reality I would ...
- The problem could be likened to ...
- A strange way of looking at it would be ...
- But the main point is ...

Then redraft your problem statement in the light of the insights gained.

Springboards

As before get into a group of 3 or 4. Each tells the others about possible problems and the group selects one to work on. Once this has been agreed, do each of the following exercises. You will need one person to write on the flip-chart.

I wish ...

All members contribute to a list of, say, 20 statements in the form 'I wish ... ' that describe some of things you would like to happen vis a vis the client's

problem. Put down every wish that occurs to you - sensible or crazy. All are recorded on the flip-chart.

For instance, if the problem is to do with the client's boss they might wish the following:

- I wish they liked me better
- I wish they would leave
- I wish I could turn them into a toad
- I wish we never had to meet

etc.

The client selects one of these springboards (or generates a new wish derived from the list) that seems important, interesting or intriguing to him or her rather than just appropriate. It is ringed or underlined.

How to ...

The group generate another series of statements in the form 'How to ... ', which point to particular directions they might explore in looking for a solution to the selected springboard in general terms.

In the example above these might include:

- How to persuade them to stop talking as much
- How to get them to change
- How to inform them by writing
- How to show them what I need

Again ask the client to state which appeals to him or her most and which he or she would like to pursue. Ring, underline or identify these in some way.

Concerns

The group (and the client in particular) may also want to note any concerns they have about the problem.

For example continuing with the problem above perhaps:

- Not to offend them
- Not to get sacked
- Not to take up too much time

Mapping

Large, messy, or very unclear problems often benefit from some kind of mapping exercise that lays out the elements and enables you to see how they relate to each other. Diagramming is a very useful tool in such cases. As ever some problems lend themselves to some techniques more than others.

If you are dealing with a really big problem you are unclear about, you might be better off starting with a brainstorm to check out what issues are involved before attempting any kind of diagramming. On other occasions it will be sufficient to launch straight into a simple tree diagram that maps out the various components. Use your skill in judging which technique is most appropriate for the problem as presented. One of the most generally useful mapping techniques is the mind map or spray diagram (described in a later section of these notes). Two others are described below.

Tree diagrams

One of the most straightforward ways of mapping is the tree diagram we are all familiar with from office hierarchies. Take a problem (or proposed solution, or any idea) and divide it into two or three logically distinct parts (ways of handling it, or logically distinct angles on it, etc.). Then divide each of these into two or three, and so on, so that you produce a tree-like diagram. The

process of dividing it up in this way forces you to think about the logic of the problem. Often this is a good way of unpacking a complex issue.

Since the purpose of the exercise is to enrich your thinking about the problem, it is not necessary to have agreement amongst the members of the group about how to do this, and indeed if different members of a group each do this privately, they will almost certainly produce different trees. This variability can be a valuable way of capitalizing on the differences in the group and preventing any particular tree becoming overemphasized. Once you have produced the trees, try to formulate a problem statement in the light of the tree analyses.

Cause and consequence maps

An alternative approach is to use a cause and consequence map, which asks you to map out the 'whys' and 'so whats' of a particular problem or issue.

1. In the centre of a large sheet of paper placed in landscape position write down a key phrase which summarizes the nub of your problem.
2. Immediately above this write down what seem to be the most direct causes of this problem. Join each of these direct causes to the central problem by an arrow, pointing from the cause to the problem.
3. Above each of these direct causes, write down what seem to be the most direct causes of them. Repeat this several times so that you end up with a radial pattern of causes of causes of ... of causes of the problem, all linked by arrows pointing from each cause to its direct consequence.
4. Below the central problem, plot the direct consequences of the problem, and then the consequences of these consequences, and so on, with arrow heads again pointing from each cause to its direct consequence.

You end up with a tree with branches and roots. The central trunk represents the original problem. The finer and finer branches are the increasingly remote causes of the problem. The finer and finer roots are the increasingly remote consequences of the problem. You may end up with cross-connections and loops, so that the 'tree' becomes in fact a network. Some people prefer to

write each entry on a 'Post-it pad' slip so they can rearrange the tree easily (smallest sizes work best). This kind of exercise can be useful in planning policy documents. The consequence part can be useful in evaluating proposals.

Idea development

Purge

It can become tiresome to produce a long list of obvious ideas. Furthermore, if you think you have the obvious solution it can be hard to relax enough to come up with the zany ones that might produce a much needed new angle. One way round this is to purge all the obvious and sensible answers that immediately spring to mind via a quick brainstorm. Having sorted and classified these (because they can still be very useful, so they certainly shouldn't be discarded), set them aside and begin a second round designed to go beyond these immediate ideas. For instance you could try some of the provocations below, with a view to coming up with new examples and perspectives. Some people find this two stage approach' clears the decks' and leaves the mind more open to explore the less obvious approaches.

Brainstorming

Classical brainstorming emphasizes the importance of 'deferred judgement' and the idea that 'quantity breeds quality', embodied in four principles:

- All criticisms and put-downs are forbidden during the idea generation phase.
- Freewheeling (accepting any idea) is welcomed.
- Go for quantity - as many ideas as possible.
- Try to build on other ideas, e.g. by combining them or improving them.

Nominal group technique (NGT) is so-called because, although the group members come together in the same room, they actually generate most of their ideas privately so that they are a group 'in name only' (nominal). As well as emphasizing the importance of an initial 'private' brainstorming, NGT also

emphasizes the use of the round robin rather than quick-fire group responding to gather ideas.

We suggest a combination of these. You may like to begin this with a warm-up generating ideas about something like: 'How many uses can the group think of for a used hot water-bottle?' This eases the atmosphere and lets everyone practise the rules.

Then try the same kind of thing with a real problem. Assuming that you have already been through the problem exploration stage and now have an agreed problem statement or springboard to work with, proceed as follows.

1. Remind everyone of the agreed problem statement, and the four principles of classical brainstorming.
2. Begin idea generation by getting each person to write down privately their ideas about the chosen problem or springboard.
3. Then collect these together on a flip-chart or a series of Al sheets stuck up on the wall. Pre-numbering the sheets can save time and you may want to use two 'writer-uppers'. It helps to go round the group two or three times in a round robin asking each person to give one idea in turn before allowing a free for all, so everybody has a chance to contribute.
4. Encourage people to build on other people's suggestions to come up with further ideas. A variety of 'building' techniques are described in the following pages.
5. Continue until just after the flow begins to dry up, perhaps ending up with 30 to 40 ideas and more in a larger group.

Notebook

Even if you do not have access to a group, you can nevertheless gather ideas very effectively on your own, if you can extend the idea collection over a longer period of time. All you need is a small notebook or ideas diary that you carry with you and the habit of recording thoughts or ideas relevant to a

particular problem or issue immediately they occur to you. Discussing the issue with others and using some of the provocations described below can enhance the idea-generating process without the logistical problems of a formal brainstorming session.

Provocations

It can be difficult to come up with imaginative ways of solving problems purely by listing ideas that come to you immediately, or just by bouncing ideas off one another in a group. However, there is a range of techniques that can be very useful in provoking more radical thinking, and for working on your own, when you do not have the benefit of other people to stimulate and challenge your thinking or when a group has run dry of ideas. The kinds of provocation used in lateral thinking and creative problem solving all have the same basic goal - to provide a routine way of getting to an area of thought that is remote enough from your ordinary thinking that it is likely to bypass your unconscious assumptions and habits and so provide a genuinely new perspective. They achieve this by devices such as random jumps, radical distortions or transformations of the original topic (e.g. by reversing it) or by exploring analogies or metaphors.

Sometimes one can relate the reversed problem, metaphor or analogy or random word directly back to the problem, or via free association. Alternatively you go on an excursion (a brief holiday from the problem) noting ideas associated with the random word or whatever and then attempting to relate one or more of these back to the problem (forcing the connection if necessary). This will often put the original topic in a new light, drawing attention to other possible approaches. See de Bono's Lateral Thinking for more on this type of approach. A variety of provocations are listed below.

Make sure that you express your ideas in a form that suits the task. For generating possible solutions to a practical problem, try to express your ideas as possible actions - phrases with a verb in them ('Do this', 'Try that' ...). For identifying possible factors in a situation as part of problem exploration, the

ideas should normally be noun phrases (factors, people, events, changes, etc.).

Random

Choose any random stimulus you like. Perhaps pick the first object you see as you glance about you, or the first sound you hear, or open a book, dictionary or newspaper, etc. at random, and pick the first noun or verb you see. Some people like to make this strictly random (e.g. using dice); others prefer to introduce an element of choice, selecting things or words that catch their attention, or intrigue or appeal to them in some way. The strict random approach is likely to be better at producing stimuli that are genuinely unconnected with the problem, but it can seem mechanistic. The subjective approach usually feels more 'in tune' with the user, can be more motivating, and gives room for intuition, but it may be too comfortable!

Once you have your stimulus, forget the original problem, and write down the first half dozen or so words you associate with the object or word selected. Then pick the one that appeals most and try to relate this back to the problem.

Weirdos

Brainstorming often produces some bizarre, fantastic, impossible, or unacceptable ideas. Although these are clearly useless as ideas in their own right, they can be very valuable as triggers for other ideas which may be very useful. De Bono refers to them as 'intermediate impossibles'. These 'weirdos' are often very valuable as starting points for provocative excursions. For instance 'kill the boss' is clearly out of the question, but there may be many perfectly acceptable ways of removing his or her impact from the situation; perhaps the job could be taken over by some other manager, or the boss might be encouraged to move to another department, or go on holiday. Or by considering the loss that would result if the boss were in fact killed, you might begin to appreciate his or her value, and begin to look for approaches that recognized his or her strengths. You use weirdos in just the same ways you would use random stimuli.

Reversal

Reversing the sense of your topic can often be an excellent way of coming up with new ideas on the topic. For instance, 'How to get on better with the boss' may be reversed to 'How to get on worse with the boss'. This might suggest throwing things at him, arriving late and telling him how difficult you find him.

There are essentially two ways of using these reversed ideas:

- You can re-reverse them, so that if throwing things at your boss would make the relationship worse, perhaps protecting him and recognizing his vulnerability would help it. The initial reversal has identified a two-way dimension that could be used to make things either worse or better, and the re-reversal has exploited this.
- Sometimes the reversed idea can be used directly. So 'Telling him or her how difficult you find him', done in the right way, might actually make the situation better rather than worse. Your automatic assumption that this would be disastrous has stopped you thinking it through properly. Reversing it made it acceptable to attend to this possibility.

There are many different kinds of reversal that you can try. You can reverse direction, values, orientation, 'no' to 'yes', impossibility to possibility, time-flow, inside / outside, and so on. Try any or all of these.

Analogies

Analogies can prove a wonderful source of new approaches although people vary in the ease with which they relate to analogical or metaphorical thinking. The basic idea is to find an analogy to your problem. For instance, if your problem was to find a new job, you might take the analogy of fishing. In this case you could think of what happens when people go fishing; they need a rod and bait, a pond or river, perhaps wellingtons, etc. Then transfer this back to finding a job. Are you going to look in a large or small pond? What is your

bait? Where are you going to cast your rod and what kind of fish are you trying to catch? How are you going to protect yourself (equivalent to the fisherman's wellingtons)?

Initially you may tend to produce analogies that are very close to the problem and pick rather obvious associations to relate back. However, it is often the most bizarre analogies, or words that seem quite unrelated to the problem, that can produce the greatest change in thinking and are more likely to produce a totally new idea.

Chapter 2

Cartoon Story Board

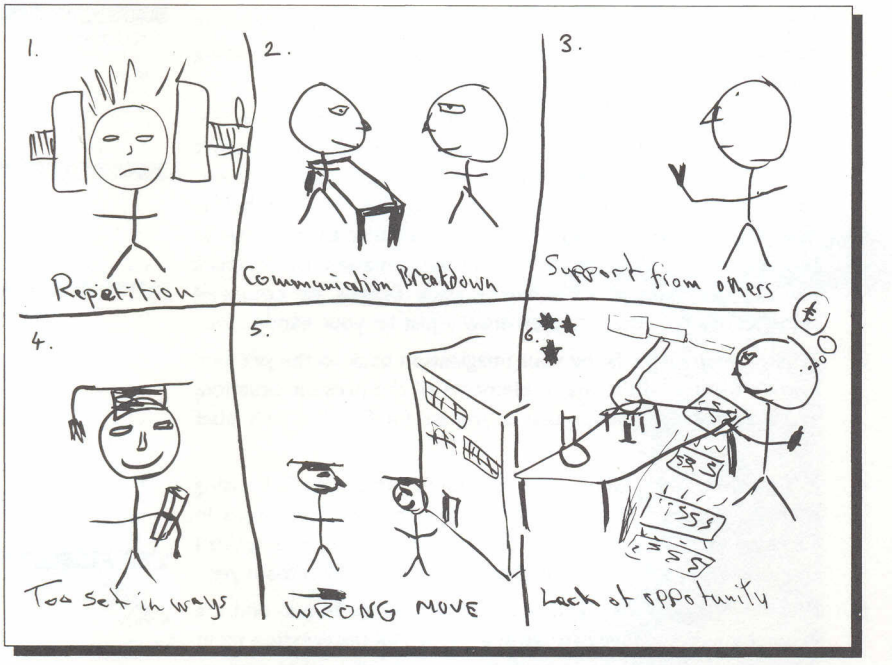
This technique is a simple way to use drawings to clarify a goal and a route to achieve it, and to identify key blockages in attaining the goal.

While you can use an ordinary pen and sheet of A4 paper, a range of coloured felt-tipped pens and a large sheet of paper (e.g. AI flip-chart) are better.

- *Preparation* Place the paper in the landscape position. Draw six square boxes on it (see overleaf), and label them I to 6, leaving enough space under each to write a short sentence.
- *Where you are going* Relax, and get an image in your mind of a goal you are trying to achieve. In your imagination, transport yourself forward in time to the point where you have achieved your goal successfully. What does it feel like? What is happening? How are you and others reacting to it? Draw in Box 6 a picture that conveys to you this situation. *Don't label it* yet. No art skills are needed - stick figures or coloured splodges are fine; don't 'try' to draw - just let your hand draw.
- *Where you are now* Bring your imagination back to the present. Form an image of the major elements of the present situation, and draw that in Box 1, much as you did for Box 6. Don't label it yet.
- *Intermediate turning-points* Do the same for Boxes 2-5, using them to depict a sequence of four key intermediate steps in successfully moving from the present situation to the desired situation -four key 'scenes in the drama'. Don't label them yet.
- *Potential blocks* When you have finished all six boxes, and are happy that they convey (to you) a successful progression from 'here' to 'there', spend some time contemplating your picture, and when you feel you have a good sense of the positive progression through the six boxes, begin to think of

what must be overcome if you are to make this progression. Write a word or brief phrase under each picture to show what might *block* the progression at that point; these are the key challenges you must overcome.

This is a plan your conscious and unconscious have co-operated in producing, so it is an expression of your current state of mind on this issue. Spend some time contemplating what you have produced, both the progression you want and the challenges it implies. You may find it helpful to discuss your picture with someone, and to put it on your wall for a few days so that you can continue to let it work in your mind. If after that it still seems sound to you, then do it. If after thought and discussion you are not happy with it, then use this representation to help you identify the problems for another round of problem solving.



The figure above is adapted from an actual student's story-board. Although the example clearly shows private sketches by someone who wouldn't claim to have graphic skills, nevertheless the images are powerful, the pictures show a very clear direction and the words show very real concerns.

Chapter 3

Using Imagery

Screen

The basic idea here is to imagine a screen in front of you with your problem, rather like a film, showing on it. You can think of the screen as about 10 to 20 feet in front of you. First imagine your situation or particular problem or issue as it is now, on the screen in front of you. Notice all the people and places involved, see how you behave and react, and notice your feelings and the attitudes of those around you. Then imagine that screen being pushed to one side and in its place a picture of the solution to your problem. Try to keep the solution within the bounds of reality. Once again notice all the people there, how are they behaving, notice how you are, what you are doing and how you are feeling.

Mentally get up out of your seat and walk forward into the screen, into your screen self and really feel what it will be like in the future, when this matter is cleared up. Enjoy the feeling, notice what it is like and take in all that is happening in as much detail as you can. For this to work you need to identify with your screen self as fully as possible. Then when you have done this for a while and really know what it will be like, mentally leave the screen and back away towards your seat and sit down. As you do, get the film on your screen to start to wind backwards showing you how you got from your position now to the position in the future that you have been enjoying. How you did this often comes as a surprise. Attend hard as the film unwinds before you and what has to be done becomes clear. Once it is back at the beginning commit your intention to take this path. This commitment is as important as the rest.

Often the way to proceed is very clear in this process, which typically has a very calming effect, dissolving anxieties and worries as the way forward becomes obvious whether this is a difficult or an easy path. As with any

exercise of this type it will not always work and sometimes the outcome will be mere wishful thinking, or nothing. When it works it can produce a highly creative and effective solution in a very pleasant manner in a matter of minutes.

Chapter 4

What Can I Do On Monday?

You've heard the talk, read the book, bought the T-shirt but what practical steps can you take on Monday morning?

To start off you can:

Create space (physical and time) for idea generation

- By cutting down on non essential meetings
- Avoiding micro managing staff
- Allowing time for 'play' or to make mistakes (within reason)
- Allowing interaction between individuals (at the coffee machine or water cooler).

Adopt simple techniques for modifying existing products or services (see the list and twist exercise).

Think about having after action reviews to ensure that you avoid re-inventing the wheel.

Look at reward systems to encourage know-how to be shared and for salaries and bonuses to promote team working.

Hold curiosity meetings where people are allowed to ask ‘What if?’

Small businesses without boards could consider having an informal board of trusted acquaintances who will give advice in return for a meal, say.

Start looking at methods of gathering ideas that will encourage new ideas not just complaints (avoid the baggage of the traditional suggestion box). Ensure that contributions are recognised and that the process is transparent.

12 Golden Rules for Creative Thinking

Adopt a 'set to break sets' - Drive to break fixed patterns and min-sets

Explore the 'givens' - Re-examine your assumptions

Broad picture, local detail - Look at the bigger picture as well as 'zooming in'

Value play - We learned rapidly like this as children.

Build up, don't knock down - Say 'yes and..' not 'yes but…'.

Live with looseness - Allow a degree of ambiguity or uncertainty.

It is already there - nurture it - Remove the barriers and let it flourish.

Involve others - Help develop each others half formed ideas.

Connect and be receptive - Be open to idea triggers from elsewhere.

Know what you really want - Be clear about motivation and content.

Cycle often and close late - Allow for iterations and avoid premature closure.

Manage the process - Pay attention to the 'cast', the 'stage' and the 'script'

… and learn from the process.

Top Tips for Innovation

Innovation is work not genius

Innovation should be systematic

Adopt creative management techniques

Technology push or market pull - be clear

Understand the innovation life cycle

Use 'creative swiping' - scan your environment

Benchmark against competitors

Use Scenario planning not forecasting

Look at 'soft data' such as tacit knowledge and intuition as well as 'hard data'

Create a shared vision

Pay attention to internal structures

Adopt appropriate processes - borrow from Knowledge Management

… and be prepared for change.

If you are thinking of doing something to an existing product or service and are a bit stuck for ideas then why not pick one or two from the following list?

List And Twist Checklist

Add a step	Find other uses	Slow down
Eliminate a step	Find other customers	Add sound
Rearrange the steps	Improve the quality	Add motion
Outsource a step	Decrease the quality	Add texture
Add an ingredient	Make it easier	Change packaging
Complicate it	Eliminate something	Automate parts
Combine ingredients	Align with other product	De-automate parts
Make it bigger	Align with other service	Standardize
Make it smaller	License	Speed it up
Make it more extreme	Make it more expensive	Put some fun in it
Substitute materials	Find new distribution	Change the state
Make it less extreme	Make it less expensive	Divide it
Make it self service	Combine other processes	Change the shape
Make it more reliable	Make it educational	Bundle it

You can probably think of even more qualities to use in your 'twisting' process:

Make it friendly	Add beauty	Add information
Make it an experience	Make it exclusive	Add or change color
Make it biodegradable	Make it interactive	Let customer finish

Add more service	Make it a game	Put a story with it
Make it look old	Make it look new	Make it edible
Celebrity connection	Reverse the concept	Turn it upside down
Flatten it	Make it wearable	Make it sticky
Purify it	Add nostalgia	Add smell