

12 Top Tips for Thinking Creatively

1. **Adopt a 'set to break sets'**
Try to break fixed patterns and mind-sets. Doing what you have always done, or just because someone else says so will not help you solve difficult problems. Do something different or try a new way of doing things.
2. **Explore the 'givens'**
Re-examine your assumptions. Just because something was impossible last year, it may be possible now. Examine all of the rules and boundaries within which you operate, have they changed or are they not as restrictive as you first thought?
3. **Broad picture, local detail**
Look at the bigger picture as well as 'zooming in'. Too much detail and our heads explode, too little and we do not have enough information. TO be effective we need a bit of both.
4. **Value play**
We learned rapidly like this as children but education often kills this. As adults we need to experiment and try out new things. Interaction also sparks new ideas and play boosts creativity.
5. **Build up, don't knock down**
Say 'yes and..' not 'yes but...'. Building on someone else's ideas is more productive than shooting them down in flames. Often the best ideas are a 'mish mash' with contributions from many sources. Beware of compromises though.
6. **Live with looseness**
Allow a degree of ambiguity or uncertainty. When managing Creativity we must allow for the fact that not everything can be managed precisely. It also allows us to 'hedge our bets' or keep options open. Only make decisions when you have to.
7. **It is already there - nurture it**
We are all creative to some degree. Remove organisational barriers and let natural Creativity flow. Creative techniques and tools can be added later.
8. **Involve others**
Help develop each others half formed ideas. Being creative alone is not easy. Interaction with others helps generate ideas and reshape existing ones as well as helping to challenge fixed patterns and mindsets..
9. **Connect and be receptive**
Be open to idea triggers from elsewhere, including colleagues, books, magazines, films and even competitors.
10. **Know what you really want**
Be clear about motivation and your ultimate destination. Creativity with no objectives is just play. Without clarity, the process cannot be managed.
11. **Cycle often and close late**
Allow for iterations and avoid premature closure. If you do not have to make a decision, or submit a document – don't. Living with ambiguity and waiting a little might create that opportunity for a better solution to come along. Park the problem and revisit it several times.
12. **Manage the process**
Pay attention to the people, the environment and the strategy that you wish to follow. Have you got the right staff, do they need any help, what is your work environment

Creative Business Solutions

Tel: +44 (0)114 339 2802
thefuture@creative4business.co.uk
www.creative4business.co.uk

like, does everyone from the top down know what parts they play and what direction they are moving in? If you cannot provide a framework (even a loose one) to work within, your Creativity programme is just expensive play.

... and above all, **learn** from the process.

Top Tips for Innovation

1. Innovation is **work not genius**
Innovation is a fusion of ideas and knowledge that requires a management framework and the right management style. It will fail if you do nothing and cannot fail if you take action.
2. Innovation should be **systematic**
Innovative organisations behave like an Innovation machine. Everyone knows what parts they play but behaviour is not prescriptive, there is no manual.
3. Adopt **creative** management **techniques**
Not everything needs to be creative but the toolboxes of leaders and managers must embrace creativity and allow for the most appropriate tools to be used.
4. Technology push or market pull - **be clear**
Are you trying to change the marketplace or does the market dictate what you are trying to do. Clarity is important here as mistakes are expensive.
5. Understand the innovation **life cycle**
Know about 'early adopters' and the 'long tail' as well as sigmoid curves. You must know about your markets and how new developments arrive and fade into the past.
6. Use 'creative swiping' - **scan your environment**
Looking around at your competitors and other sources can provide good ideas and create short cuts. A mentality of 'not invented here' can increase costs and lengthen timescales. Don't just blindly copy though as context is often important.
7. Benchmark against **competitors**
Regularly look at your performance in terms of the competition. Note the competition is any business that is competing for the same money in the pockets of your customers, not just businesses offering competing products.
8. **Scenario planning** not forecasting
Forecasting is based on the present or past and uses simple extrapolation with one or two 'what if' statements thrown in. Generate real scenarios or even use 'Futures' to predict up to 30 years into the future.
9. Look at 'soft data' such as tacit knowledge and **intuition** as well as 'hard data'
Intuition is simply a decision based on tacit knowledge (knowledge not expressed publicly or externally). This is valuable and completely different from guesswork.
10. Create a shared **vision**
Strive to create an organisation where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. To do this everyone must be pulling in the same direction.
11. Pay attention to internal **structures**
Traditional hierarchies are not productive. Pay less attention to control and more on communications, advice and trust networks.

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12. Adopt **appropriate processes** - borrow from Knowledge Management
Also look at newer ideas from social media that make use of corporate culture rather than systems based on hard technology.

... and be prepared for **change**.

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