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Thinking creatively to solve problems – an overview



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Creativity tools are tried and tested ways of coming up with new solutions and perspectives to an issue, problem or improvement opportunity.

If you want to think differently, you need to observe what is going on around you. We are used to viewing situations from our own personal perspective. However, by developing the skill of looking at things in a variety of different ways, you can make new connections and lateral leaps.

When you are stuck in one way of thinking and feel that you have exhausted all the options, a 'fresh pair of eyes' can see a whole new way of doing things that you hadn't thought of before.

When to use it

When you want to make improvements to services, the thinking creatively tools will help you generate ideas and consider challenges from a new perspective.

How to use it

Stimulating resourceful thinking typically involves three mental processes:

1. Focus attention on something that you don't normally focus on
2. Escape from the way you traditionally think (often called 'thinking outside the box')
3. Suspend judgement and allow your imagination to explore different possibilities.

The specific details for each of the tools and techniques can be found in the relevant sub sections:

- [Brainstorming](#)
- [Six Thinking Hats®](#)
- [That's impossible!](#)
- [Fresh eyes](#)
- [Bullet proofing](#)
- [Simple rules and breaking them](#)
- [Simple rules – provocation](#)

Examples

Professor Elliot demonstrated a great example of creative thinking when he connected car racing to heart surgery and applied his learning from how a pit stop is performed to improve the transfer processes at the end of heart surgery (Ferrari pit stop saves Alexander's life, William Greaves – *The Telegraph*, 29 August 2006).

What next?

Although you may not be used to using specific tools to help you think differently and come up with ideas, it is worth investing time in. Try using the tools with your team and see where it takes you.

Additional resources

Atkinson I (2014) *The Creative Problem Solver: 12 Smart Problem-Solving Tools to Solve Any Business Challenge*, Paperback

Plsek, P (1997) *Creativity, Innovation, and Quality*, Quality Press