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UNLEASHING YOUR CREATIVE THINKING IN THE WORKPLACE

by Dr Victor S.L. Tan

Creative thinking is an open thinking approach which explores novel ideas and great possibilities that can result in innovations such as new products or services in the workplace and marketplace.

Companies are limited by external resources, such as money, machines, materials, manpower and methods (5 Ms). However, companies that train people to think creatively can tap into a powerful and limitless resource — creativity.

Creative thinking brings benefits to individuals as well as organisations.

- It enables individuals to achieve extraordinary results and helps boost their self-esteem.
- Through creative thinking, teams in organisations can come up with innovative products and services.
- Creative thinking enables solutions for situations or problems
- It is an effective way for organisations to gain competitive advantage and sustain it.

According to a college-educated professionals survey conducted by Adobe in 2012, 85 per cent of respondents agree that creative thinking is critical for problem solving in their career and 68 per cent believe that

creativity is a skill that can be learnt.

Our company, KL Strategic Change Consulting (KLSCC) has helped many clients find creative solutions to their problems. Here is KLSCC's Five "O's Creative Thinking Approach.

THINK ORIGINAL

Arthur Clarke was thinking original in a May 1970 issue of "Popular Science" magazine, when he predicted that satellites would one day "bring the accumulated knowledge of the world to your finger tips". Of course, to think original requires one to analyse and synthesize what information or data there are and come up with new and bold ideas altogether. Our company put this think original concept into reality when my book, "The Secret of Change" got into the "Malaysian Book of Records" as the first motivation book written in poems with every sentence that rhymes.

THINK OUTRAGEOUS

Thinking outrageous is exploring things that are out of this world, which are bold and shocking. If there is anyone with the most outrageous thinking in the corporate world, it has to be Richard Branson. In 1985, he dressed as a "Spiderman" and dropped down a London skyscraper just to raise £50,000 for a local hospital. His idea of intergalactic space travel, outrageous

and dangerous as it may seem even with the crash of the Virgin Galactic Spaceship 2 in 2014; he has not abandoned his dream of promoting space tourism venture and has more than 700 passengers queuing up and willing to pay US\$250,000 per seat to take the first flight.

THINK OPPOSITE

Thinking opposite is being illogical and counter-intuitive. It is about thinking of the benefits and advantages that can come from taking the 180° view of things.

Here are some examples of think opposite ideas:

- It is a good thing that one is fired from his or her job as the person can explore being an entrepreneur;
- The recycling business is turning someone's "rubbish" into another's treasure;
- Failure is a good opportunity to start again and this time, better around;
- If we want our interests to be served, serve the interests of others; and
- Before things get better it has to get worse first.

By thinking opposite, one can turn a disadvantage into an advantage. A case illustration is Nic Vujicic, who was born without arms and legs, but he leveraged on his lack to become

a successful motivational speaker. He married a beautiful girl of her dreams and has two adorable sons.

THINK OMNIPOTENT

Thinking omnipotent is about thinking that one has unlimited source of power and influence and believing that all things are possible. In Napoleon Hill's classic bestselling book, "Think and Grow Rich", he pointed out that, "whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve". It was said that Thomas Edison in inventing the light bulb tried sixteen hundred different filaments before finding the one that worked. Such is the power arising from thinking omnipotent, which culminates in breakthrough results. Sir Winston Churchill said it best: "The empires of the future is the empire of the mind", for such power comes from thinking omnipotent in achieving whatever goals whatever the mind can conceive and believe.

THINK OUT OF THE BOX

A box is a metaphor for a frame, a perspective or mindset that limits one's thinking. To think out of the box requires one to rid outdated rules or assumed barriers to enable one to achieve a breakthrough result. A good example of a box was that when the high jump sports change from a hard landing pit to softer foam, many continue to use the old styles of jumping – the "scissors" or the "western role". Then came Dick Fosbury, who think differently from the rest. Instead of jumping the old way with his face towards the bar, Fosbury turned his body, arched his back, and went over the bar backwards, while landing on his neck and shoulders. He used the "thing of the box" approach to invent the Fosbury style, which enabled him to break a record jump of 2.24 m in front of 80,000 spectators at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico.

Companies can use the Five "O's Creative Thinking approach to boost the creativity of their staff and introduce innovations to help them stay competitive and win.



Dr Victor S.L. Tan is an international change authority who undertakes change management consulting and seminars. For more information, email him at victorsltan@klsc.com or contact him at 012-390 3168.

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