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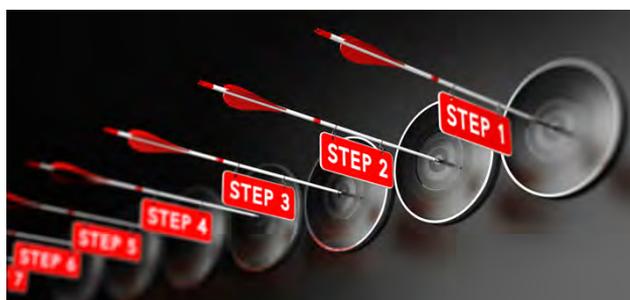


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How to Boost Profits with Creative Thinking Techniques

One of the best ways to boost your profits is with innovation, but you can't begin without appropriate creative thinking techniques.

Creative thinking techniques fuel innovation, encourage new insights and solutions and give your business an edge over your competition. However, innovative thinking methods aren't always easy to understand and apply.



All too often, those tasked with being a creative thinker suffer from:

1. **Anxiety** (the feeling of worry, nervousness or unease that comes from 'blank page syndrome' - not knowing where to start - and inhibits positive affect and creativity)
2. **Functional fixedness** (inflexible thinking and beliefs that prevent the development of new ideas)
3. **Negative judgements** (self-imposed beliefs and discouraging comments that destroy your curiosity and desire to look for alternative solutions).

These creativity barriers have a major impact on creative output, innovation potential, competitiveness and, ultimately, your business' profitability.

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If you want to maximise the ideas that boost profits, you need to apply creative thinking techniques to overcome and move beyond these problems.

Overcoming anxiety with step-by-step instructions

A frequently used creativity thinking technique for overcoming anxiety, is to provide step-by-step instructions for the creative task/problem you're trying to solve. This is so prevalent in the creative thinking process because step-by-step instructions:

- Lower anxiety by reducing white page syndrome
- Improve enjoyment of the process
- Increase your level of creativity, intrinsic motivation and creative output.

Innovators often couple step-by-step instructions with creative thinking methods to overcome problems associated with functional fixedness and negative judgements. Some creative thinking methods to include in your creative toolbox are the:

- Subtraction method
- Cropping technique
- Stated goal exercise.

Creative thinking technique 1 - The subtraction method

This tool is designed specifically for overcoming anxiety and functional fixedness. To employ this creative thinking method, you:

1. List all the system components (current solutions and problem to solve) under examination
2. Identify one item you perceive adds value to the system *and remove it*



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3. Work with the revised system to find ways to create value (new ways of making the system work). This will take some persistence to meet user desirability needs while overcoming obstacles to feasibility.

After attempting to find new value using the 'less is more' approach, you can then replace the item you removed with something more readily available to see if that can help bridge the gap between desirability and feasibility.

This method can initially feel uncomfortable because it takes us away from our instinctive freeform creative approach. However, this is its strength. Counterintuitively, it *forces* us to consider a form we'd previously dismissed as silly, absurd or impossible. It's a powerful creative thinking technique because of its simplicity and ability to *inspire* new thinking.

Creative thinking technique 2 - The cropping technique

This creative thinking method also tackles functional fixedness. It's somewhat similar to the subtraction method and involves:

1. Identifying all key components that make up your creative task
2. Moving an item physically within the context of your system or changing when it appears in your system
3. Working with the revised system to find ways it can create value. Be persistent in overcoming the obstacles to feasibility while meeting desirability needs
4. Spelling out all the barriers to work through how you might adapt or revise the system to extract value if you can't make it desirable and feasible.

The strength of the cropping technique is its ability to bring fresh perspectives on concepts that are unlikely to be found with a standard trial-and-error approach to creativity.

Creative thinking technique 3 - The stated goal exercise

Focused on overcoming negative judgements, using the stated goal exercise means:

1. Writing your goal at the top and your name on the bottom of a piece of paper

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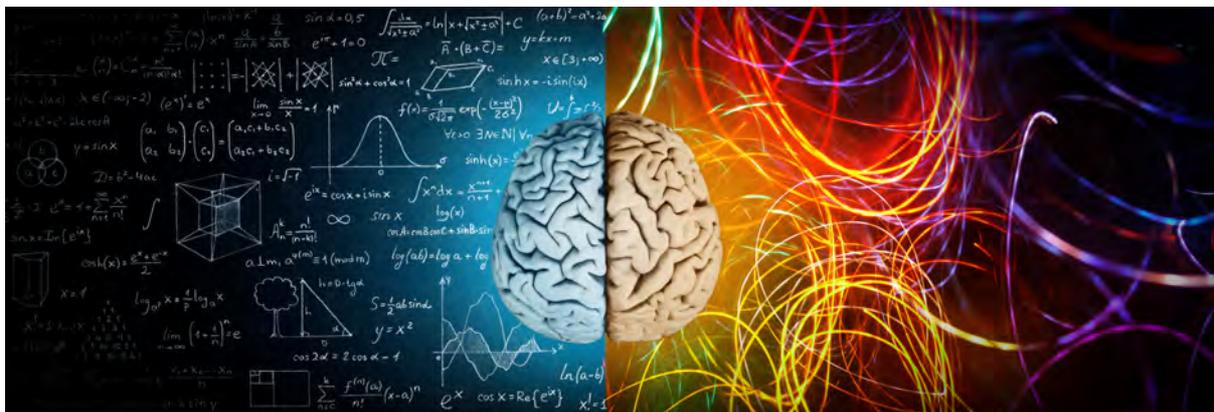
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2. Linking the two with a vertical line and then branching out from this axis, drawing eleven horizontal lines
3. Starting at the top, use each line to list the reasons you believe you can't achieve your goal, including negative judgements and assumptions, whether real or perceived
4. Working down the page, dig deeper into each reason to uncover your underlying judgements until you fill all eleven lines
5. Reviewing each negative judgment or assumption as though it belonged to someone else
6. Establishing whether they're real problems you can't overcome or whether they're more akin to excuses. Try to 'crush' them – it can help to ask, 'What if the opposite was true?'



You'll be surprised how many negative judgements and assumptions you can overcome by working through them in a concrete, objective manner. With the right mindset and focus, you'll likely discover a feasible way to deliver on your goal.

In short, this creative thinking method boosts creativity by:

1. Making you aware of your fears, negative judgements and the assumptions that hold you back
2. Helping you overcome functional fixedness
3. Providing a systematic and concrete way of 'crushing' excuses

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4. Increasing your prospects of finding the insights and solutions needed to deliver on your goal.

Practising step-by-step instructions

Using these creative thinking techniques **provides the opportunity for fresh ideas and improves the speed at which you can find them.**

Ultimately, practising these techniques for developing creative thinking will increase your creativity, improve your prospects of harnessing the value of your creative potential and, if used correctly, boost your business' profitability.

If you'd like to learn more about these techniques and other creative thinking methods, call **Fortitude Business Consulting** on **1300 551 040**.

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