

Two Creativity Tips

Contributed by Steve Gillman
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For better ideas and more creative solutions to your problems, try these creativity tips.
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The two creativity tips that follow suggest two of the dozens of basic questions you can ask to increase the creativeness of your thinking. Ask these as you work on something, and you can see more creative results today.

1. A Question Of Purpose

{bot_wrgoogle}Asking certain questions can lead to more creative ideas. These questions don't include "How is everyone else doing this?" or "What is the usual approach to this problem?" Here is a better one: "What is the important goal here, and how could that be accomplished differently?"

The idea is to look past the form to the function, and find new ways to achieve that. For example, when you consider your job, the most creative approach is not to ask where you can find a better one, but to ask why you have one, and what alternatives there are. Is the purpose to make money, pay the bills, or work up to a better job?

Consider how you might accomplish each of these in other ways. Can you make a business of what you do? Can you write a book about the characters you work with? Can you get someone else to pay the bills (manage an apartment complex in exchange for rent and utilities?)? Can you design the position you want and then convince an employer that they need to create it just for you?

2. The Basic "What If" Question

This is a fun way to have more creative ideas. Just start asking crazy "what if" questions, and then find a way to make them not so crazy. Eventually you'll refine a few of your ideas into something useful.

For example, if you run a college and want to develop more creative ways to educate people and increase enrollment, you could start by asking, "What if we made a drive-through window for students, instead of another classroom?" That seems crazy enough, so you start looking for ways to make sense of it - to create something useful from it.

The first thing that pops into your head is a drive through window for the bookstore - that seems like something which might work. Taking classes at such a window just seems too crazy, though, until you consider the window as just the place the student gets his or her assignments. What kind of assignments? That's when you have your "breakthrough idea."

The name "audio college" enters your mind, and you imagine classes on CDs. People spend so many hours in there cars, so why not use that time? A student could listen to class lectures while traveling or just driving to work or to the store. This isn't appropriate for all classes, and on-site testing might be necessary, but perhaps as much as a third of the students credits could be accomplished in this form, and at a lower cost. Enrollment might go up with a system like this.

The key is to ask any "what if" question that comes to mind and play with it for a few minutes without criticizing any ideas that come to mind. Critical analysis should be done after this "brainstorming" session, so you don't discourage your creativity. Many bad ideas will lead to good ones if they are allowed to develop and change.

The two creativity tips here cover just a couple of many dozens of creative thinking techniques, but they are powerful enough to get you thinking in new ways. Why not try them out today?

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