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Random Input

A tool to help think creatively

A businessman once went to a bank in New York City and sought a loan of \$1000. The businessman had to show some valuable asset as collateral, which to the bank manager's surprise was a newly bought Mercedes. The manager, though puzzled, went ahead and granted the loan.

Out of the box...

A year later, the businessman came back to repay the loan along with the 10% interest accrued. The bank manager could not understand the logic behind a Mercedes as collateral. He asked the businessman if he was really in need of \$1000. The businessman smiled and said "Just think outside of the box. Where else can I get such a safe parking place elsewhere in New York City for just \$1000 a year?!"

Creative Solutions

The need to "think outside of the box" is often heard in various situations. The complex problems that organizations face require creative solutions.

Creativity is the ability to think and develop new or innovative problem solving ideas. We often see people escaping from problems - the reason stated by them being their uncreative mind. The truth though is far from it.

Creative and non-creative minds are matters of self-perception. Creative people view themselves as creative and convert problems to opportunities. On the other hand, non-creative people hardly think about creativity and see creativity as some people's innate asset.

All of us are born with an enormous amount of creativity, but we tend to lose some of it over the span of our academic and professional careers. We are all pushed to "meet the requirements" and restrict ourselves from trying out new things.

The good news is that some proven practical tools are available to help us think creatively again. One such simple tool is Random Input.

Random Input – Making Creativity Easier

Random Input is by far the simplest of all creative techniques and is widely used to generate new and innovative ideas. This can be done individually or as a team, although a team is more effective than an individual because it can create a pool of ideas.

Start by writing the problem on a "problem statement". Next, select a random noun from either a dictionary or a pre-prepared list of words. The best way to do this is to simply close your eyes and point to a random point in a page of a newspaper or a book. Now brainstorm to relate this word to your problem and identify commonalities, if any. List



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these ideas on a piece of paper. This could bring in a variety of ideas, one of which could ultimately help to resolve your problem.

For instance, assume that your problem is the polluting car. A random noun word search might lead to the word 'telephone'. Find out what "polluting car" and "telephones" have in common. Brainstorming from this could evoke ideas such as

- Telephones convert one form of signal to another.
- Is there any equipment that could convert CO₂ back into oxygen?
- If yes, how about passing the exhaust gases through that equipment to convert CO₂ back into oxygen?
- How about installing a metabolizer to clean up obnoxious gases?
- Telephones help transmit signals from one place to the other. Perhaps exhaust gases could be collected in a container, and sent to a special plant to be re-converted?

These ideas need not necessarily solve your problem. Some may be erroneous and impractical. However, one of them could lead to an idea that would resolve your long-standing problem.

The only drawback to this tool is that many people tend to discard the selected word and move on to another word. They feel that the selected word has nothing to do with their problem. Instead, think for a while and find as many associations as you can between the two. You may not immediately see the association since it doesn't fit your thinking pattern. You will find dozens of new ideas if you let your imagination go wild and think with a focus.

Conclusion

Random input is an effective way of getting new ideas to solve a problem. It often leads to amazing creative leaps. It provides an easy way of breaking out of restrictive thinking patterns. Moreover, it helps you to evolve a range of new solutions that you would not otherwise associate with the problem.