

CREATIVE TECHNIQUES ANALYZING THE ENVIRONMENT RECOGNIZING IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS, AND MAKING ASSUMPTIONS

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Annotation: One of the best ways of becoming more creative is to use techniques (processes) that increase the potential for creativity in a given situation. Such techniques can be applied at all stages of the CPS process: analyzing the environment, recognizing the problem, identifying the problem, making assumptions, generating alternatives, choosing among alternatives, implementing the chosen solution and control. Many of these techniques involve the use of groups, which have been shown to be useful in raising levels of creativity. This book focuses on techniques used in generating alternatives but presents a few techniques for each of these other stages.

Techniques for Analyzing the Environment

Many people recognize that a problem exists when they have failed to meet an objective or believe they may fail to meet an objective. The purpose of most control reports is to provide such comparisons. People may recognize an opportunity when they become aware that they could exceed their objectives by choosing a certain alternative or taking advantage of a situation. Frequently individuals compare current performance with prior objectives, prior experience, or last year's performance in order to determine whether a problem exists. When they see a difference between the current situation and what was previously thought appropriate, they recognize that a problem exists. GE has developed a process known as the workout. Workouts involve a three-day retreat in which managers and their subordinates gather to solve problems experienced by the work unit. It is a highly participative effort with a unique twist. Subordinates suggest the causes of the problems and recommend solutions. On the third day these are presented to their manager, whose superior manager is also in attendance sitting behind his or her subordinate but facing the employees. The workout manager must choose

among three responses to subordinates' recommendations: Yes, no, or let's examine it and make a decision by a specific date. Deferrals are discouraged." The workout manager must make a decision about employee suggestions without knowing what his or her boss's reactions are because of how the two managers.

Techniques for Identifying the Problems

Identifying the problem means making certain that your actions will be directed toward solving the real problem or taking advantage of the real opportunity, rather than merely addressing symptoms of the problem or an apparent (but not necessarily real) opportunity. Problem identification requires careful analysis.

A well-known set of identification techniques has been suggested by Charles Kepner and Benjamin Tregoe, who believe that correctly identifying the problem is the most important step in creative problem solving. Their approach, described in their book *The Rational Manager*, begins by asking what's different now than before; this is followed by what, where, when, how, and why questions. Kepner and Tregoe like to use the example of a ball bearing manufacturing facility that began finding impurities in some of its ball bearings. The company replaced the machine that manufactured the ball bearings, but impurities continued to appear. Eventually, after answering the "when" question, the company's managers determined that the impurities occurred only at periodic intervals. After asking and answering the other questions, they discovered that an air-freshening unit was blowing impurities into the molten metal; the unit came on only at certain times during the day." Finally, the real problem was identified.

This section describes twelve techniques that can be used in the problem identification stage of creative problem solving. problems for several reasons:

1. It encourages problem solvers to study all parts of a problem before making a decision.
2. It helps show the relationships between causes and the relative importance of those causes.
3. It helps start the creative process because it focuses the problem solver(s) on the problem.
4. It helps start a logical sequence for solving a problem.
5. It helps problem solvers see the total problem as opposed to focusing on a narrow part of it.
6. It offers a way to reduce the scope of the problem and solve less complex issues rather than more complex ones.

7. It helps keep people focused on the real problem rather than going off on tangents.

King of the Mountain

King of the mountain is a children's game in which one player gets on top of something, such as a stump or a chair, and the others try to knock him or her off. A similar game can be used as a problem identification technique. 16 One or two individuals take a position on what the problem is, and other members of the group attempt to knock them off their definitional "mountain." To succeed in doing so, the challenger must have a better definition of the problem. Just as in the game, once someone has knocked another person off the mountain, he or she must get on top of the mountain. His or her ideas are then attacked until another challenger succeeds in becoming "king of the mountain." The survivor, who might have modified any of the ideas presented earlier, possesses what is now a group consensus regarding the true nature of the problem.

Problem Statement

At the end of the problem identification stage, by using the various techniques described here, in addition to more traditional analytical approaches, you should have identified the causal problem and be able to make a more accurate problem statement than you might have otherwise. Various approaches to stating the problem exist. Generally, the more specific the problem can be stated, the easier it will be to solve that problem. Thus if the problem is stated as "poor product partly due to poor quality" this would not be as effective as if the problem were stated as "poor quality due to poor workmanship caused by poor worker training." Some CPS authors believe that the problem should always be stated in terms of the preposition "to" followed by some object and an action verb. An example would be, "to improve worker training on chip making machines in order to improve product quality to satisfactory levels." Assumptions about the future underlie every decision you make. Assumptions set constraints on your solutions.

People frequently force solutions into the shape they want by manipulating the underlying assumptions. One man entered the restaurant business after hours of computer spreadsheet manipulations, assuming that the revenues would be sufficient to justify the investment. Two years later he was out of business. His assumptions about sales were wrong, as were his assumptions about food costs and his own ability to motivate low-wage workers. I know of only one creative technique for making assumptions. It's called assumption reversal.

The List of Used Literature

Arthur B. VanGundy, *The Product Improvement Checklist (PICLT)* (Point Pleasant, N.J.: Point Publishing, 1985).

"Creative Group Techniques," *Small Business Report* (September 1984), pp. 52-57.

Dan Koberg and Jim Bagnall, *Universal Traveler* (Los Altos, CA: William Kaufman, Inc., 1974), p.57.

Michael Michalko, *Thinkertoys* (Berkeley, CA: 10 Speed Press, 1992), pp.43-49.

Tony Husch and Linda Foust, *That's a Great Idea*, (Berkeley, CA: 10 Speed Press, 1987).

INSON HAYOTIDA IQTISODIY, IJTIMOIIY, MADANIY VA EKOLOGIK HUQUQLAR

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