

YES You Can!



**Excerpts from the
YES You Can! ebook series**

by Derek Cheshire

Creative Quotes

“If you see someone doing the impossible, don’t interrupt them.”
(Amar Bose, Bose Corporation)

“Don’t spend time beating on a wall, hoping to transform it into a door.”
(Coco Chanel, designer)

“Those who say it can’t be done are being passed by those who are doing it.”
(Unknown)

More Creative Quotes are contained in the full version of this ebook.

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About The Author



Derek Cheshire spent a number of years working in the Software and Telecommunications industries, asking awkward questions and being told ‘that’s the way we have always done things around here’.

Not satisfied with the answers, Derek obtained an MBA from the Open University Business School and instantly understood the impact of one of the course modules ‘Creativity, Innovation and Change’.

Since then Derek has created a unique innovation model that allows direct innovation measurement and encourages a holistic approach to Innovation. He actively encourages the use of creative techniques in everyday business processes to allow companies to realise their full potential and create the products and services that their customers want. His work encompasses consultancy, idea generation and facilitating continuous innovation.,

Derek is an accomplished speaker and has compiled a long list of blog articles including *Innovation – How long is a piece of string?*, *Taking the In out of Innovation* and *How To Generate 20 New Business Ideas Over Coffee*. One of his papers is soon to be published by the ICFAI Business School in India as part of a reference book **Strategic Importance of Idea Generation and Management**.

Derek is also a member of the mastermind group for the Design Interaction course at the Royal College of Art and Design in The Hague and recently took part in the CNBC programme **The Business of Innovation**.

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Solving Problems Creatively

Creative problem solving works by splitting the thinking about a problem into a series of stages. Many gurus talk in terms of three main stages: an initial exploratory phase where one identifies the problem to work on and considers it from different angles; a second phase where one considers alternative ways of dealing with the problem; and a third phase where one works out the detailed implementation of a chosen way forward. Within each of these three phases it is common to encourage an imaginative phase where different acts and possibilities are considered, followed by an evaluative phase where these possibilities are considered and a way forward is chosen. So you can think of the problem-solving process as follows:

Stage 1: Explore problem Open up (diverge): Explore different angles
Close down (converge): Select key problem

Stage 2: Generate ideas Open up (diverge): Consider alternatives
Close down (converge): Select preferred option

Stage 3: Implement plan Open up (diverge): Plan supporting action
Close down (converge): Undertake action

Since the whole process is itself an expansive opening out of new actions, it needs its own overall evaluation phase as well- in effect a fourth stage:

Stage 4: Evaluate Open up (diverge): Monitor progress
Close down (converge): Adapt action

How much time you spend on each phase depends on the nature of the problem; a problem you were unclear about probably warrants more time in the exploration stage whereas something more straightforward may merit more time in the idea generation stage. If the issue is likely to generate conflict then the implementation stage is likely to be worth considerable attention.

Set out this way the procedure seems very rigid; in practice it is much more relaxed and iterative. If, for example, during the idea generation stage you suddenly realize that really some other problem is the one you should be addressing, go back to square one for another round of clarifying and exploring the nature of this problem; then return to generate and consider possible courses of action for this reformulated problem. Problem solving should be very practical and end up with a plan that feels appropriate and that the problem owner is willing to implement. If after selecting a plan of action you realize that in fact you are not prepared to implement it, then treat that as a useful insight and go back and consider others until you find the best one that you are willing to implement.

One reason for problems is that people often think too narrowly, in mental tramlines born of habits worn into the brain's patterns of thought over time. If you precede a closing down phase by an attempt to consider the problem, solution or plan of action from various perspectives you force the mind to go beyond its usual assumptions. From these different vantage points it may jump to a more appropriate response to the problem. The opening up phase in each stage may help people who are particularly prone to premature evaluation of possibilities.

People prone to the opposite tendency of 'castles in the air' thinking may benefit from the discipline of the closing down phases. The action-planning phase often helps the vague-minded to commit themselves to a concrete action. As you get more practised you will speed up and become better able to judge which techniques to use when and the different stages and phases may become collapsed together. The procedure may eventually be replaced by a mental framework that serves the same purpose.

In our workshops you are likely to work through a series of problem exploration, idea generation and action planning techniques similar to those discussed in the full version of this ebook.

To find out more and sign up for our free newsletter visit <http://www.creative4business.co.uk>.

Cartoon Story Board

This technique is a simple way to use drawings to clarify a goal and a route to achieve it, and to identify key blockages in attaining the goal.

While you can use an ordinary pen and sheet of A4 paper, a range of coloured felt-tipped pens and a large sheet of paper (e.g. A1 flip-chart) are better.

Preparation Place the paper in the landscape position. Draw six square boxes on it (see overleaf), and label them 1 to 6, leaving enough space under each to write a short sentence.

Where you are going Relax, and get an image in your mind of a goal you are trying to achieve. In your imagination, transport yourself forward in time to the point where you have achieved your goal successfully. What does it feel like? What is happening? How are you and others reacting to it? Draw in Box 6 a picture that conveys to you this situation. *Don't label it yet.* No art skills are needed - stick figures or coloured splodges are fine; don't 'try' to draw - just let your hand draw.

Where you are now Bring your imagination back to the present. Form an image of the major elements of the present situation, and draw that in Box 1, much as you did for Box 6. Don't label it yet.

Intermediate turning-points Do the same for Boxes 2-5, using them to depict a sequence of four key intermediate steps in successfully moving from the present situation to the desired situation -four key 'scenes in the drama'. Don't label them yet.

Potential blocks When you have finished all six boxes, and are happy that they convey (to you) a successful progression from 'here' to 'there', spend some time contemplating your picture, and when you feel you have a good sense of the positive progression through the six boxes, begin to think of what

must be overcome if you are to make this progression. Write a word or brief phrase under each picture to show what might *block* the progression at that point; these are the key challenges you must overcome.

This is a plan your conscious and unconscious have co-operated in producing, so it is an expression of your current state of mind on this issue. Spend some time contemplating what you have produced, both the progression you want and the challenges it implies. You may find it helpful to discuss your picture with someone, and to put it on your wall for a few days so that you can continue to let it work in your mind. If after that it still seems sound to you, then do it. If after thought and discussion you are not happy with it, then use this representation to help you identify the problems for another round of problem solving.

We have literally hundreds of tools and techniques at our fingertips, all designed to help people and organisations see the world differently. Visit <http://www.creative4business.co.uk> to find out more and register for our free newsletter.

Using Imagery

For various reasons it is not advisable for those unfamiliar with these techniques to read them and then start practising them. It has been known for individuals to fall asleep whilst driving or operating machinery. In severe cases people may become distressed. Imagery techniques are available in the full version of this ebook for use only as part of a supervised course.

What Can I Do On Monday?

You've heard the talk, read the book, bought the T-shirt but what practical steps can you take on Monday morning?

To start off you can:

Create space (physical and time) for idea generation

By cutting down on non essential meetings

Avoiding micro managing staff

Allowing time for 'play' or to make mistakes (within reason)

Allowing interaction between individuals (at the coffee machine or water cooler).

Adopt simple techniques for modifying existing products or services (see the list and twist exercise).

Think about having after action reviews to ensure that you avoid re-inventing the wheel.

Look at reward systems to encourage know-how to be shared and for salaries and bonuses to promote team working.

Hold curiosity meetings where people are allowed to ask 'What if?'

Small businesses without boards could consider having an informal board of trusted acquaintances who will give advice in return for a meal, say.

Start looking at methods of gathering ideas that will encourage new ideas not just complaints (avoid the baggage of the traditional suggestion box). Ensure that contributions are recognised and that the process is transparent.

List And Twist Checklist

This is an abridged version of the full list available from Creative Business Solutions.

Add a step	Find other uses	Slow down
Rearrange the steps	Improve the quality	Add motion
Add an ingredient	Make it easier	Change packaging
Combine ingredients	Align with other product	De-automate parts
Make it more extreme	Make it more expensive	Put some fun in it
Substitute materials	Find new distribution	Change the state
Make it self service	Combine other processes	Change the shape
Add more service	Make it a game	Put a story with it
Celebrity connection	Reverse the concept	Turn it upside down
Purify it	Add nostalgia	Add smell

Find out more from <http://www.creative4business.co.uk>.