

A signpost with four directional signs against a blue sky background. The signs are: a blue arrow pointing right with the text 'A DO IT YOURSELF', a green arrow pointing left with the text 'MANUAL & ACTIVITIES', a white arrow pointing right with the text 'FOR DEVELOPING', and a white arrow pointing left with the text 'CREATIVE THINKING'.

**A DO IT YOURSELF**

**MANUAL & ACTIVITIES**

**FOR DEVELOPING**

**CREATIVE THINKING**

**HANDMADE  
CREATIVE  
THINKING**



This manual is the result of the project **Handmade Creative Thinking** funded by the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme, sectorial programme Leonardo da Vinci, Transfer of Innovation action (LLP-LDV-TOI-09-IT-0479).

[www.handmadecreativethinking.eu](http://www.handmadecreativethinking.eu)



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## Preface

The idea behind the Handmade Creative Thinking project came from a recognition of the need to tackle the challenges that the Cultural and Creative Industries face in Europe and the great potential of Creative Thinking to enable innovation and change.

CESIE as the applicant and coordinator applied for funding from the European Commission, LLP Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation, in order to develop a project that would improve the effectiveness and competitiveness of the applied arts/craft sector, by empowering vocational trainers, SME's, workers and apprentices with new skills for innovation.

The aim was to make available the techniques collected in this Manual, not only to those already working but also to those who in the future will be training or will have the responsibility of training, craft workers and artists.

For CESIE, the project and the collaboration of organisations from different countries have been incredibly enriching.

Capture Arts had a background of working with children and Creative Thinking, and had developed a new thinking tool, the Capture System, a cross fertilisation of Creative Thinking techniques combined with hands on activities, that was successfully applied in the education sector within the Foundation Stage of the UK National Curriculum. We felt this was the perfect methodology we were looking for to transfer: concrete innovative activities for the development of Creative Thinking and also suitable for the target groups we wanted to support, primarily artist makers who use their hands to transform ideas into tangible results but who might be in crisis due to the challenges of globalisation and the development of new communication technologies.

The partnership was then completed by Euromed Connect, an expert in the business sector and Seneca, a vocational training centre, which gave the necessary expertise to be able to transfer this product to a wide target audience

This Manual is the result of two years of intense work that began with an exploration of the current needs of the applied arts / craft sector in Italy, UK and Malta and concluded with the transformation of the Capture System into a Do-It-Yourself Manual, which we hope will transform the way you implement change, use innovation and transform challenges.

**Angela Martínez-Carrasco**

Handmade Creative Thinking Project Coordinator

## The Global Challenge



There can be no doubt that globalisation and the current economic shifts present ever-greater challenges to any business regardless of its size or type. On the positive side new technologies also make it easier for us to offer our products and services throughout the world. The European Union leads various initiatives to support micro-businesses and SME's, primarily to enable them to develop strategies to accommodate global challenges.

In 2010 the European Union launched a scheme committing €100,000,000 to support the development of the Cultural and Creative Industries and the crafts sector is one of the beneficiaries of this scheme. The EU has also launched the INNOVATION UNION policy document that places INNOVATION at the top of the Union's agenda for development.

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm)

The way products are produced, packaged and marketed needs to be transformed so that SME's can stay competitive on a global scale. Doing business with 20th Century methods in the 21st Century is no longer an option.

Sustainable change requires innovation; if there is no innovation the ability to thrive will be more limited in a world that is changing so rapidly. True innovation begins with taking a different perception of processes, resources and markets; only from this new point of view will it be possible to change how we do business.

### Continuing Learning

Developing the ability to innovate can be stimulated and enhanced through learning or training process, developing this skill can put you in a position to be several steps ahead of your customers and competitors enabling you to provide more cutting edge products and ideas.

Due to the need to encourage innovation, the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector emerges as a key factor in developing new methods and approaches to the teaching of Creative Thinking. The ability to apply and develop innovation skills needs the support of a learning infrastructure, which VET practitioners are best placed to provide.

Creativity is at the basis of innovation and innovation is a support for the growth of small enterprises, then it is paramount that Creative Thinking is embedded in any training programme.

VET Practitioners will also have a crucial role to play by championing and empowering all participants to learn Creative Thinking and use these skills in developing their ideas, products and business opportunities.

*Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.*

**Mark Twain**

## Manual Change



This manual and its accompanying activities are designed to develop Creative Thinking as a skill and to help you to apply it in the daily running of your business, craft & arts practice and for you personally.

We hope that this manual will inspire you and give you the momentum and inspiration to look for more techniques to keep learning and moving ideas forward.

This manual has been developed to make it accessible and easy to use, because we want you to try out some of the thinking activities that we have developed. The activities will enable you to start to make space for Creative Thinking when you want to solve a problem, need to overcome challenges or when you want to develop something new and innovative.

In essence this manual will act as a framework to support you in facing and overcoming your challenges, in the process turning them into opportunities.

### **This Manual And Its Related Activities**

In this manual we are primarily concerned with Creative Thinking, a fundamental skill that is generally lacking in society and often misunderstood. Many of us think Creative Thinking could be important for us, we just aren't quite clear **what** it is and how it can help us.

For Creative Thinking to flourish certain conditions must be in place, once you become aware of the processes and what you need to do, and then Creative Thinking can be simple, powerful and effective.

### **Applying Creative Thinking**

At the base of every new product there is idea generation and at the core of every idea is Creative Thinking. Most of us are born with the capacity to think creatively, paradoxically this method of thinking is in conflict with our other ways of thinking, namely logical, critical and analytical thinking. The challenge is to learn how to switch our thinking processes towards applying Creative Thinking within many aspects of our daily life and work.

The generation of new ideas is at the basis of innovation - without the creation of new ideas, we cannot innovate anything.

In business one of the common limiting factors for the generation of new ideas is the concept that any idea I have will need to be successful. Generally only 2 out of 10 ideas actually make it to market. This means that one of the challenges we face is the need to develop a creative culture within our businesses, not just in our core skills but even our business skills. Producing a very interesting and exciting product is only one part of the story.

Increasingly we are being challenged to become more competitive which means that we have to change the way we produce our products, the way we package our products and even the way we market our products. Doing business as we did yesterday is no longer feasible and sustainable.



## Thinking Facts



Usually when we have an issue or problem to solve we are often overwhelmed with all the aspects. This state can easily get in the way of clear thinking! If we can separate out all of the thoughts and emotions and deal with them in an organised way, then what we are left with is space to use creativity in the thinking process.

When we use Creative Thinking tools they enable us to escape the barriers of how we usually solve a problem and think, they allow us to generate lots of ideas and help us to get ready to take effective action.

### How Do We Think?

When we are thinking we generally use critical or Creative Thinking. They are the two most basic methods of solving problems. **Critical Thinking** is a matter of thinking clearly and rationally. **Creative Thinking** usually consists of coming up with new and original ideas. To be a good and effective thinker, the ability to apply both kinds of thinking is essential. During our formal education most of us have all been taught how to apply Critical Thinking, very few of us have ever been taught how to apply Creative Thinking.

#### Creative Thinking is

- Generative
- Non-judgmental
- Expansive
- Possibility
- Right brain
- Yes and..

#### Critical Thinking is

- Analytical
- Judgmental
- Selective
- Probability
- Left brain
- Yes but..

### To Put It Simply

When you think **creatively** you are exploring many new ideas. When you are thinking **critically** you are making choices.

*Think of the thinking process as a kayak with 2 paddles. One paddle represents Creative Thinking while the other represents critical thinking. If you were to only use one paddle (i.e., critical thinking), you'd end up going in circles. To make the kayak move forward, you've got to alternate between paddles.*

**Eric D Brown**



## 'Am I a Creative Thinker?'

Many of us believe we are not Creative Thinkers; you might ask yourself 'Am I a Creative Thinker?' and have very little understanding of what it means and feel a lack of confidence and skills to apply it.

You might be creative in making something but that ability doesn't necessarily transfer when you need to solve a problem.

We believe that everyone has Creative Thinking potential; in fact 98% of us are born with it.

*Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.*

**Sir Ken Robinson [www.sirkenrobinson.com](http://www.sirkenrobinson.com)**



As children we all used our imagination to create new worlds and transform ordinary, everyday things into something extraordinary. This kind of applied imagination is still possible for adults; many of us have just forgotten how to do it. It's the main technique we need to remember when we want to think creatively.

As you go through this manual we would like you to start to ask different kinds of questions that will help you to open up your thinking, so let's start with changing the one above;



Am I a  
Creative  
Thinker?



**SHIFT  
YOUR  
THINKING**



**HOW** Am I  
a Creative  
Thinker?

If we **change one word** it can transform the question into a more open-ended query.

## Creative Thinking Techniques

Creative Thinking techniques are processes by which we focus attention, escape the confines of the current situation and generate connections to keep the mind moving. Fundamentally it is a change in direction in your thinking and the generation of new ideas. Children do this naturally but many adults find this process difficult and challenging. Changing old habits is a key factor to being able to think creatively.

### What are the benefits of using Creative Thinking techniques?

When you can master Creative Thinking it is incredibly powerful. In the current socio-economic climate, it is important that we have the capacity to solve problems and keep one step ahead. With the use of Creative Thinking this is possible. It is a fundamental stepping-stone to the generation of new ideas as well as problem solving and can be applied to many areas and different situations. It enables you to be flexible and innovative.

### What are the personal benefits of using Creative Thinking techniques?

They are self-empowering and enable you to overcome challenges quickly and effectively; they can shake you out of your comfort zone and support you when dealing with issues. Overcoming obstacles is incredibly rewarding and in doing so you can prove to yourself that you are capable of achieving SUCCESS.

Creative Thinking can also be a powerful tool for innovation and can help you with developing new ideas or moving existing ideas forward.

### Why don't we use Creative Thinking to solve problems?



#### A problem is here!

The usual 'knee jerk' reaction to a problem is often a bigger problem than the initial problem itself. We typically avoid or ignore difficult situations until it's too late to manage them effectively. This is mainly because we have never learned or been taught the most effective emotional, psychological, and practical responses. Problems can be seen as opportunities; look at them as **challenges** in order to shift things. Just changing the word 'problem' to the word 'challenge' is a powerful mental shift.



PROBLEM



**SHIFT  
YOUR  
THINKING**



CHALLENGE

### **What is the definition of a 'problem'?**

It is very simple, it's having the insight and skills to recognise that there is something better than the current situation.

### **It can't be done, so why should I bother?**

This kind of resigned attitude is, in effect, surrendering before the battle has begun. Usually based on past experience we assume that something can't be done or a problem cannot be solved. In doing this we give the problem more power and strength than it had previously. If we give up before we start, it then becomes self-fulfilling, 'I knew that would happen, so why should I try.'

Sceptics assume something can't be done, we can't visit other planets, we'll never solve global warming, there is no cure for cancer etc. All we need to do is look at a problem differently, see it as a challenge and then an opportunity, and then we can begin to achieve the impossible. Think about it, we went to the moon, we invented penicillin, and we stopped people dying of malaria. All things people said couldn't be done.

*The difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer.*

**Anon**

### **I just can't do it!**

We are conditioned to think that we can't solve our own problems, because we think we are not:

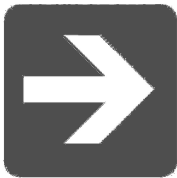
- (a) Clever enough
- (b) A specialist
- (c) A genius

Being aware of caution and risk is a valuable thing but it shouldn't dominate our thinking and make us immobile.

This kind of thinking in the right place is valuable but done in isolation and repeatedly is destructive and can stop us from moving forward in a positive pro-active way.



It Can't Be Done!



**SHIFT  
YOUR  
THINKING**



**How** Can It Be Done?

## Learning Styles

*To learn anything fast and effectively, you have to see it, hear it and feel it.*

**Tony Stockwell**

### What's yours?

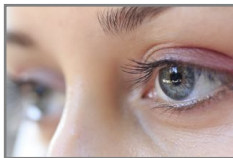
At the beginning of the manual we asked **how are you creative?**

We all have different learning styles; these are the methods we use to learn something and are visible from when we are children. Rita and Kenneth Dunn developed the concept of learning styles in the late 1970s. When you see what yours is it will be an indicator about how you tend to think. Understanding this will point you in the right direction and then you can decide what thinking tools are best suited to you.

There is a traditional saying in the UK, "If all you have is a hammer, all problems look like nails" Creative thinking is about picking the right thinking tool for the job. Understanding about how you learn is a good place to start.

There are 3 basic learning styles:

#### Visual



#### Verbal



#### Kinaesthetic



They can influence how we understand, retain and recall new information.

### Visual Learners

Visual learners can quickly understand and retain information that they see. They learn best when they can physically **see** information. If you like a flow chart, diagram, picture, PowerPoint presentation, demonstration, mind map, graph or film then this is your style!

#### Characteristics of Visual Learners

- Have the tendency to doodle whilst thinking
- Like to code and organize material and information and write things down
- Can quickly remember faces, people, places and directions
- Often think in pictures

## **Verbal Learners**

Verbal learners are also referred to as auditory learners and prefer to learn things from another person telling them or by listening to instructions in for example, a lecture. Verbal learners have the tendency to read out loud, repeat information and ask a variety of questions for clarification. They like to talk things through.

### **Characteristics of Verbal Learners**

- Prefer to work in groups in order to share and discuss ideas
- Enjoy listening to others and asking questions
- Can quickly and easily remember names and song lyrics

## **Kinaesthetic Learners**

Kinaesthetic learners prefer to learn through experience and hands-on activities. They are the learning by doing group. They are tactile individuals who prefer to have something in their hands when learning anything new.

### **Characteristics of Kinaesthetic Learners**

- Have the tendency to fidget, click a pen, tap their feet or doodle on paper.
- Prefer to learn new material in short blocks of time and will often take short breaks during any process.
- Like to explore physical objects to learn
- Can quickly assemble items without using a diagram or written instructions

You might find that you learn in a specific style, it is good to know and understand that we all learn in a different way and that you can tailor your thinking to suit your learning style.

**If you want to see what your learning style is, try this online test (in English).**

<http://www.learning-styles-online.com/inventory/>

**Look at this website, (in English). See what your brain does when you're thinking!**

<http://www.g2conline.org/#Thinking>

## Multiple Intelligences

This is a system of understanding and describing the concept of intelligence. Howard Gardner developed it in 1983. The theory is that there are a wide variety of cognitive abilities and that intelligence cannot be narrowly defined.

### The Multiple Intelligences are

- Spatial / Picture Smart
- Linguistic / Word Smart
- Logical mathematical / Number Smart
- Bodily kinaesthetic / Body smart
- Musical / Music Smart
- Interpersonal / People Smart
- Intrapersonal / Myself Smart
- Naturalistic / Nature Smart

*It's not how smart you are, but how you are smart.*

**David Brooke**

**Go here to take a test and see what you are, it's fascinating! (In English)**

[http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources\\_ftp/client\\_ftp/ks3/ict/multiple\\_int/questions/questions.cfm](http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_ftp/client_ftp/ks3/ict/multiple_int/questions/questions.cfm)

### What Can This Manual Do For You?

If you apply the techniques found within this manual and keep on using them you can develop the ability to solve problems quickly, effectively and innovatively.

The basic techniques in the manual and the accompanying modules can be applied to a variety of situations, they are easy to adapt and are transferable to other areas.

Those working in Creative Industries, Vocational Educational Trainers, Apprentices and Students can all gain valuable, transversal skills when they learn how to apply Creative Thinking.

For those working or managing a small and medium enterprise (SME's) these skills will enable you to move forward, support you in the core areas of your business and will contribute in your ability to innovate.

If you are studying or teaching a traditional craft or skill Creative Thinking can help you to develop new ideas, organise your time and be more thoughtful with your resources.

You will be able to deal with complex situations in a more considered way, problem solve, develop awareness and gain self-confidence.

**Got an issue with cash flow?**

**Use Creative Thinking!**

**Got a creative block with designing a product?**

**Use Creative Thinking!**

**Got a challenge with marketing?**

**Use Creative Thinking!**

**Got a challenge coming up with ideas?**

**Use Creative Thinking!**



## What Makes This Manual Different?

If you look on the web for Creative Thinking techniques it can be overwhelming and complex. This manual and its activities are simple to use and will give you significant results in a relatively short space of time, it is user friendly and has been designed for easy access. In addition, the activities are presented in manageable sections that you can follow at your own pace.

Although Creative Thinking is a vast subject, we have made sure that all the essential facts are there in one document. We have also developed a series of hands-on activities that you can try out by yourself or with friends.

### Let's Make A Creative Thinking Tool!

You can find out more information on the web about Creative Thinking. Here are some great websites that we think are useful.

<http://www.edwdebono.com/>

<http://lateralaction.com/>

<http://www.thinkbuzan.com/uk/home>

<http://www.g2conline.org/>

Many people face challenges when trying to apply Creative Thinking, even if they use creativity in other areas of their work and life. In order to help and support anyone wanting to develop innovative solutions and problem solving, we have decided to make a new Creative Thinking Tool.

So what exactly is a Thinking Tool? Here are a few suggestions, many will be familiar to you but you probably didn't realise they are Thinking Tools!

- Questionnaires and evaluation forms
- Questions that inspire and lead to solutions
- Books and manuals
- Conferences, seminars and workshops
- Mind maps, spreadsheets and databases
- Lists, Checklists
- Instruction videos, Youtube, webinars

How can we define a thinking tool? It's anything that can help you generate ideas, organise your thinking and enable you to move ideas forward.

## The Capture System® A Transfer of Innovation

To help you to start to apply Creative Thinking techniques in your daily life we decided to develop this manual and activities, they are adapted from an existing thinking tool called The Capture System®.

### What Is The Capture System®?

The Capture System® is a thinking tool used in the Education sector in the UK, developed by Capture Arts and Creative Projects in London. Capture Arts develop specific creative activities and use thinking tools to focus attention, escape the normal ways of thinking and keep the brain moving, exploring and making connections. The Capture System® combines Creative Thinking techniques with hands on creative activities.

The Capture System® follows the same principles regardless of what context it is being used in. We have transferred the basic principles of The Capture System® to the worksheet activities that accompany this manual.

The main principles of The Capture System® are:

- Create the right environment
- Use of language, what questions do you ask yourself?
- Gather all the information first
- Thinking time
- How do you query and explore?
- Experiment/Evaluate

### The Main Principles Of The Capture System®

#### 1. Create The Right Environment

We believe that creating the right environment to think is very important and it is a key component in The Capture System®. Something as simple as clearing a space at a table or desk and putting a piece of clean white paper down to work on, turning off your phone and computer, even sitting under a tree outside with a notebook can help you to create the right environment.

It is very important to escape your current patterns and not just mentally, a physical escape is really beneficial in enabling us to think differently. So, for effective thinking to occur the environment in which you query and explore an issue or problem is key and both the physical and mental environment has to 'feel' right.

**Module 1 / Exercise 1 focuses on creating the right environment to think.**

#### 2. Use Of Language; What Questions Do You Ask Yourself?

Language can either open the creative floodgate ("What could this be?") or close it ("What is it?"). Asking the right questions can help us focus our attention. At Capture we use very specific 'open ended' language that keeps the mind moving, the ability to keep making and creating mental connections is key to successful Creative Thinking. Very often we use closed language when trying to overcome challenges and solve problems and the brain is programmed to use existing patterns and methods, which we have been taught from a very early age. With Creative Thinking we need to re train the brain to be more adaptable and open, these techniques are cumulative and a person gets better and better over time.

**Module 1 / Exercise 3 is an exercise on the use of language**

### 3. Gather All The Information First

If you have a problem or an issue to solve gathering all the facts and data at the beginning of any process is a clear way to begin, imagine you are a computer just gathering facts and data, non-emotional, machine like. It can be very difficult to make decisions if you don't have all the important information to hand.

**Module 2 / Exercise 1 will help you to gather all the information first**



### 4. Thinking Time



Don't rush. Thinking time is a key component. Just a few minutes clear time for thinking before we embark on a task can be very beneficial to the process. Even if we don't think it is very important, we don't often give ourselves this mental space. Both the physical and emotional space must be right to practice thinking.

Setting aside a specific time and space for thinking is also a good idea. For example, *I am going to work on my new idea at 2pm on Thursday in my workshop.*

**Module 1 / Exercise 2 and Module 2 / Exercise 2 both give you tips on how to allocate time to think.**

### 5. How Do You Query And Explore?

Another key component of The Capture System<sup>®</sup> methodology is a term we call **Thinking with Objects**, this is thinking with your hands and using objects or materials. This can also include everyday objects and can even be a product you make or wish to reinvent.

Sometimes thinking is not enough and we need to apply it to something in the physical, this we could term applied Creative Thinking. Those who make art works or products, very often think with their hands and it is a format that is familiar to them. At Capture we believe it is very important to 'play with your problem'.

We have seen a visible link between the use of objects, often-random ones, and materials that have no defined function. Objects can take on any meaning we give them. E.g.: a plastic red ring can trigger different associations, due to the sensory quality of the object, this can turn it into a circus Ferris Wheel, a bracelet, a fire etc. when used in combination with the task at hand it can aid free association. All the Capture exercises use random materials and objects combined with Creative Thinking techniques.

Creative thinking is not enough; when it's combined with a sensory action it heightens the possibility for creative action and lateral and divergent thinking to occur. The sensation of losing yourself in a hands-on activity is a key factor in what we do

**Module 1 / Exercise 4 and Module 2 / Exercises 5 and 6 give you ideas about how to think with objects.**

## **6. Experiment/Evaluate**

Try things out, do it differently. If we don't give things a go we will never learn, if something doesn't work as we expected that's fine, at least we tried it out and we have learnt something.

Always evaluate in an open and honest way and try not to let your ego influence you too much! The only way we move ideas forward is to look at something and see what works and what doesn't. Keep the things that do work but don't keep repeating the things that don't. Objective evaluation is very important.

## Creative Thinking For Business

In a small business Creative Thinking can help and support you in many areas, once you start to use Creative Thinking it can be applied in different ways to a wide variety of areas, issues and problems. Here are some suggestions.

- Enhanced problem solving for your business
- Overcoming mental blocks
- Being more resourceful with your business and products
- Have a more efficient use of resources
- Spreading your net out further
- Broadening your scope and vision
- Sustaining the environment for Creative Thinking

*Your business relies upon passion - your passion for your products and service. For it is your passion that will sustain you over the long haul.*

**Greg Arnet**

There are some fundamental business areas that Creative Thinking can be very effective in.

### **Core Skills**

These are the skills you use when you make a product. If for example you are a ceramicist then the skills you use when making your pottery are your core skills. Creative Thinking can help you re-imagine, re-invent and keep on developing designs and products.

### **Business Skills**

These are some of the fundamental skills that are needed when developing and running a business.

### **Marketing and sales**

- Product development
- Business development
- Management of resources.

Using Creative Thinking can help maintain them effectively.

### **Support Skills**

These are the general skills, which support the overall activity of a small enterprise or business

- Negotiation skills
- Influencing skills
- Communication skills

They are important and Creative Thinking can help you overcome any mental blocks or obstacles you might have in relation to them.



**Now let's look at the business skills in more detail, as these are the most fundamental skills that are needed.**

### **Marketing & Sales**

Most craftspeople, artist makers and SME's encounter challenges in these areas and it is always good for any small enterprise to look for new markets and opportunities to continue to grow and expand, Creative Thinking can help in many ways. For example, when cold calling, a company was having very little success. The sales department sat down and analysed the way in which they had been working. They came up with a creative alternative – call the difficult leads first. This way, by the time you get to the easier leads, you will have practiced your sales pitch and encountered and dealt with all sorts of resistance first!



- Enable the craftspeople to look beyond the boundaries of the current market
- Challenge the usual methods of marketing
- Discover new creative ways of getting products and services to the local, national and global markets.

### **Product Development**

Many artist makers get locked into a particular product and over time, especially if that particular item is popular, find it difficult to move beyond it. They face challenges in terms of how to develop their product or how to develop a range of products, which are perhaps complimentary to each other. Sometimes it is difficult to change some basic elements for example, how can the packaging be enhanced or how can technology be used or incorporated in the product.

### **Business development**

The primary objective of any craft business is to generate business through the products that they produce. Creative Thinking can help to develop and enhance a business by looking at, for example

- New market opportunities.
- Use of the internet for business
- Expanding a product range
- Re-thinking the production processes
- Using new design technology



### **Management Of Resources**

By shifting the perspective of working with specific materials and resources and applying Creative Thinking to re-inventing what is already used, a craftspeople can open up new opportunities in how they manage what they have, especially optimising limited or very specific resources.

For example:

- Using existing materials in a different way
- Using new materials with the original product design
- Redesigning product shapes and sizes etc.

If you can apply Creative Thinking techniques across all areas of your business they can help you to stay one step ahead, utilise what you have already and move forward in a measured, confident way.

*Make your product easier to buy than your competition, or you will find your customers buying from them, not you.*

**Mark Cuban**

## Creative Thinking For Apprentices, Students & VET Tutors



During the production of this manual we have taken into account the needs of VET tutors and trainers and this manual can be easily adapted and used as a teaching aid. If you are reading the hard copy of this Manual, note that you can freely download the Modules and use the worksheets for yourself and your students: [www.handmadecreativethinking.eu](http://www.handmadecreativethinking.eu)

If you are a **VET trainer** using **Creative Thinking tools** can enable you to:

- Be more engaged with students
- Have more powerful results
- Develop effective teaching methods
- Become time efficient
- Help your students become self-reliant and more capable
- Create an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation

And for **apprentices and students** you could:

- Realise fully your potential
- Focus your attention
- Sustain your creative environment
- Be an effective problem solver
- Develop an achievable vision for your future

If Creative Thinking is nurtured and developed during the early stages of a person training for their career, it will make it easier to keep using these techniques in the future. Giving someone a Creative Thinking injection mid way through their business or working life can be harder than developing the ability for thinking during an apprenticeship or when studying.

Having the ability for Creative Thinking is cumulative, the more you practice the better you get, the better you get the more you innovate.

Make yourself some space and relax, get a cup of tea and go to **Module 1, How Do You Think?**





# CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

## HCT Modules Overview

### How to use Creative Thinking in Action

#### Introduction

The purpose of these modules is to introduce you to different techniques and methods that will help you to apply Creative Thinking.

These techniques are self-evaluating and will guide you through all aspects of exploring an issue and help you to come up with solutions and new ideas. Primarily they will enable you to organise your thinking in a clear and manageable way. As these techniques are transferable they can help you with your personal life, your business, your career or with your studies.

Each module starts with a general introduction and then a selection of activities you can try out for yourself or in small groups. There are also useful tips for trainers and apprentices throughout the modules.

The modules are in two parts:

The first module, How do you think? Looks at the basics of Creative Thinking. There are a range of activities you can try out. Also included are thoughts, tips and ideas.

Next is also a section called making Learning stick, here you will find interesting tips about maintaining techniques and new methods of learning.

The second module, Applying Creative Thinking, pinpoints more thoroughly some techniques for you to try out and apply. It includes a section called Thinking for Business, that is useful for SME's.

**Give the activities a go and overall have fun!**

## **Sensory Learning**

Sensory Learning involves our senses, not just our brain, it is very beneficial and effective, therefore we have different types of activities, use lots of visuals and work hands-on to enhance a multi-sensory experience.

In the worksheets you will see regular features, which will help you to remember important aspects. We have selected three symbols to help you recognise some of the features more easily.



### **Prepare yourself**

A short reminder to prepare your environment for Creative Thinking will appear alongside some of the exercises. This will get you into the habit of paying attention to your thinking. As these activities are aimed at helping you to change your thinking habits, this preparation is very important, as it will help to lay the groundwork for your success.



### **Log It**

We encourage you to keep a logbook or diary and write down or draw your ideas and the evaluations you undertake. It's a useful habit to develop as it means you will find everything in one place and it will help you to see your progress.



### **TIP!**

Throughout the worksheets are tips and hints to help you, also included are tips for trainers and apprentices to enable you to apply the activities to your teaching and studies.

## **Hands on activities**

Some activities are hands on and you will need to get some materials before you start, this may seem strange at first but don't be put off because these are the activities where you can play and have fun, even when you are dealing with problems and challenges.

# CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

## Module 1: How Do You Think?

In module one you will find simple exercises, playful activities, tips from others and query questions to help you to discover how you already think.

In this module we will look at the following

- Creating the right environment
- Finding thinking time
- Using the best language
- Thinking with objects
- How to evaluate and progress



The aims of module one are

- Develop Self Awareness,
- Recognise how you think at the moment
- Clarify your current situation and help you start to generate a vision for your future

The exercises in this module are most effective if they are carried out in the order they are presented in, as they build upon each other.

There is no set time scale for this module, many of the activities are quick but there are some indications for a proposed length of an exercise if necessary, but overall do the activities in your own time.

If you are a tutor or trainer, you can combine the exercises in different sessions with your apprentices. You can also photocopy and distribute the worksheets, and encourage your participants to start to think creatively outside the classroom.

**Don't avoid any activities you find challenging, just have a go!**

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 1: Creating The Right Environment

#### How to create the right physical and emotional environment

We believe that creating the right environment to think is very important, it could be as simple as clearing a space at a table or desk and putting a piece of clean white paper down to work on, turning off your phone and computer, even sitting under a tree with a notebook, whatever works for you is best.

It is very important to escape current patterns and not just mentally, a physical escape is really beneficial and sometimes something as simple as a different environment enables us to do this and enables us to think differently.

As far as the emotional environment goes, you need to feel relaxed, not under pressure or stressed. Have you ever gone for a walk while trying to tackle a problem? Did it help?

The environment for thinking is very important and more often than not, we don't consider it when we have a problem to solve, we want solutions immediately but trying to solve a problem with the phone ringing, emails to read and other things to do is not necessarily the most beneficial environment.

You need to create a space for thinking, for our modules you need to be able to work in this space on a variety of activities we have developed for you, you will need a clear space for writing down ideas and doing some practical tasks. If you don't have a lot of desk space, you could use a large sheet of paper pinned to the wall.



#### TIP FOR TRAINERS

You can also create the right environment at work with your colleagues, for example, before a meeting or workshop, suggest swapping places in the room or if possible work outdoors. You will see how changing perspective stimulates new ideas and creativity!

- Where do you think best?
- Outside in a park
- At home somewhere
- On the train, cycling or when moving around
- In the bath, under the shower
- When looking at visual images e.g. magazines or newspapers
- Chatting with friends
- Doing something practical like cooking

Over the next few days we want you to be aware of the places you think the best and remember them. It is a good idea to keep a logbook and write things down, this is a great method of keeping track of your thinking, ideas and general creative activity.



**Get a book or scrapbook and start writing your thoughts down.**

# CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

## 2: Thinking Time



### Thinking Time

It is important to consciously make time for thinking. Often when we need to solve a problem we feel overwhelmed by the amount of information or want solutions immediately. Sometimes ideas and solutions come when we leave a little time, forget about the issue for a while or when we change our environment by taking a walk.



### TIP

Set a specific time and place for your thinking, for example:

**I will contact my web designer on Tuesday at 3pm at my office.**

### Changing Thinking Patterns Takes Time

Thinking patterns that we have established throughout our life are often hard to change instantly, but it is sometimes necessary to change them in order to move forward. Your brain is set into certain patterns from a very early age. Some patterns and habits we can change relatively easily, like changing the route to work, but the more ingrained patterns take time and effort. For example to change how you deal with risks will take a bit longer and involve more effort. It is important to be gentle and patient with yourself if you want to achieve real change.

### How To Change Thinking Patterns

Some of the exercises will encourage you to become more aware of our thinking patterns, to know when to step back from an issue or problem and being aware of the spaces we sometimes need to solve something. Don't put yourself under pressure to come up with solutions immediately.

Are you aware of your thinking patterns?

As a small task on how to become more aware of the way you think, try to recall the last time you had a problem or issue to deal with, can you remember your first reactions?

- Did you go into panic mode?
- Did you freeze?
- Did you immediately take action?
- What did you do?

It's good to be aware of your thinking habits, write your thoughts in your notebook.

*Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way.*

**Dr. Edward de Bono**

### **Activity for Trainers**

Try this activity with your apprentices to help them recognise and be aware of their thinking patterns. Write the following questions on one side of a sheet of paper; make sure you have enough copies to distribute to the group.

- In which context did I have this discussion?
- Why did I say that?
- What could I have said differently?

Next fold the page in half, hiding the questions.

Give one folded sheet to participants, asking them not to open to it.

Next, ask them to think about the last time they had a difficult discussion or a heated debate with someone and to write down the conversation they had.

Then, ask them to swap their written notes with a classmate, who will open it and ask them the three questions.

Allow each person the opportunity to respond to the questions, give them at least 10 minutes to reflect on the answers.

The aim of this activity is to raise their awareness of their thinking patterns when they are in disagreement with someone. This will help them to understand how they react and how they can improve their approaches in the future.

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 3: The Use Of Language

#### What questions do you ask?

Language can either open the creative floodgate or close it.

Using 'open ended' language keeps the mind moving and encourages it to make mental connections, which is the key to successful Creative Thinking. It can be very easy to switch from a 'closed' form of questioning to an 'open ended' form of questioning, that allows you to be inventive and creative. For example, when you ask questions like what else could I use this for? Or what could I do instead? You can be more expansive in your thinking and come up with unexpected solutions.

The exercises in the manual around the use of language will encourage you to look at how you ask questions and explore issues, how you question yourself and what kind of language you use.

#### Let's try

This example will demonstrate a different way to explore and question. We will break the thinking down into different areas.

Look at the object in the picture. If you have one near you, get it out and have a good look at it, take hold of it and then answer the questions. It is not the most exciting object in the world but we will make it more interesting by asking the right questions.



**You will need your notebook for this activity.**

1. What can you tell me about this object, what can you see? Only think about the facts, what is real and visible. So, for example when we look at the object in the picture what shape is it? What material is it made from? Now you try and write down a few more examples.

2. Next, ask yourself what is good about this object, what benefits are there for using it, what is good about it's design? (Hint: it is great for heating food in.)

Think of some other benefits and uses just 3 or 4 will do.

3. OK, now what would you have to be careful about with the cooking pot, what risks are involved when using it? (Hint: the handle might get hot)

Write down a few more risky things about the cooking pot.

4. So far we have dealt with the facts, benefits and risks of the pan and what we have done is leave some space in our thinking for Creative Thinking.



Look at the pan again.

What else could it be? (For example fishing net)

- How could you use it differently? (You could wear it as a hat)
- How could you make it better? (Add detachable pieces that could transform it into a new cooking tool)
- If it was as big as a house what could it be? (For example, a swimming pool)
- If it was as small as a thimble what could we do with it? (For example, a cup for a fairy)



Now the craziest ideas are what we want here, anything goes. Don't hold yourself back!!

Now imagine applying this technique to an object you design and make? Imagine being free to re-invent it! You can apply this technique in more detail to solving a specific issue or problem; we will try this in Module Two.

### Case Study

During the HCT project a group of trainers initially had some challenges with an activity where they were asked to apply this technique to a bouncy rubber ball. The facilitator asked them to think of as many different uses for the object as they could. Initially the participants were blocked, no ideas were expressed. The facilitator suggested “the nose of a clown”, “a pillow for a small creature” but still nothing! Participants could only see a ball and were afraid to think creatively.

The next activity was to continue developing the plot of a film, using some interesting drawings to inspire them. They gradually started to free up their thinking and the participants who were completely blocked with the “ball” activity became the most creative with this activity and came up with some extraordinary stories!

During the feedback of the session, the facilitator asked if they thought they could use these activities with their apprentices, one of the trainers said that she was a little afraid about using it with younger students as they might become too creative and would not be able learn things properly. The facilitator responded by asking, “are you not more worried about making them lose confidence in their imagination?”

This case study shows that starting to think creatively could be a challenge for many and by applying Creative Thinking techniques helps to see beyond the standard educational methods and recognise the benefits of applying Creative Thinking.



## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 4: Thinking With Objects

#### Hands on thinking

Sometimes Creative Thinking techniques used by themselves are not enough. We have discovered a benefit for the thinking process when you use thinking tools but combine it with a sensory or physical action.

The use of objects or materials that have no defined function can lead to a specific kind of thinking called 'Divergent Thinking'. This is simply taking your thoughts onto a different route, like driving through a diversion on the bus.

For this reason objects and materials can be very useful when practicing thinking, we can assign them new meaning or they can inspire new ideas. For example a piece of paper could become any number of things if we use our imagination. So, it could be a magic carpet, if folded it could be a house, it could be a telescope if rolled into a tube etc.

#### Let's try it.

In this simple exercise we encourage you to take hold of a real object. Handling a real object can make quite a difference; its material, texture, colour, size or shape might inspire new ideas.

Imagine you are from another planet. Take an everyday object for example a cup or a mug. Take hold of it; explore its shape, texture, etc. Imagine you have never seen this object before.

Now instead of asking yourself the usual question

What is this?

Ask yourself what **could** this be?

When we change the word 'is' to 'could' we are opening up our language for more possibilities.

Give yourself 2 minutes to think of as many new uses for the cup as possible.



**Write down your thoughts in your notebook.**



#### TIP FOR TRAINERS

Use this 'Thinking with Objects' activity with your apprentices or other trainers, focusing their attention on something they create, produce or sell. Don't stop any ideas that materialise, no matter how absurd they are!

Then, ask the participants to think about what else the objects, or even the materials or tools, could be used for. Challenge them to expand their thinking!



## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 5a: Find Out What You Need For Craftspeople

#### Evaluate your current situation

This initial questionnaire is an opportunity to take a closer look at yourself, your work life and what inspires you.

All participants of the focus group who took part in the research phase of the HCT project for the development of the manual have answered these questions. They found it very helpful and gained some useful insights about themselves. Choose the questionnaire that best suits you.



**Write the answers in your logbook.**

Take your time with this, do it over a few sessions if it is too much for you in one go. Go to one of the next sections if you are a trainer or an apprentice.

#### Questionnaire

Take as long as you need to do the questionnaire.

#### What do you enjoy about your work?

- What do you enjoy the most about your work and why?
- What new projects or developments of your work are you looking forward to?

#### Self-improvement

- What do you do to keep training and learning to improve your skills and knowledge?
- Do you attend any courses, workshops or seminars? What kind?
- Do you use the web to find out information?
- Your customers/clients?
- What do you do to actively attract customers?
- Do customers come to you as a result of other actions? E.g. Word of mouth, recommendation

#### Any worries?

- What at the moment do you think is not working so well and what do you think are the reasons for this?
- What concerns do you have for the future of your business?
- What do you do when you are unable to resolve a problem or have a mental block?
- Do you tend to solve your problems alone?
- Who do you talk this kind of problem over with?
- Can you think of a situation that you did something different to solve a problem?

#### Anything is possible!

- Do you have a vision or dream for the future, if so what is it?
- If you had a magic wand that could guarantee the success of a project, what project would you choose to carry out?

**How are you creative?**

- What does Creative Thinking mean to you? Do you apply it in your professional and personal life? If yes, how do you apply it?
- What do you like doing outside of work and why?
- When you were young, what was your favourite game or activity?

Did you discover anything interesting or useful from your answers?

Sometimes it can be useful to take some time to assess your current situation. It is also good to remember who inspires you and why, what can you take from that and apply to yourself right now. Does it help you to remember your aspirations?

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 5b. Find Out What You Need For Apprentices and Students

#### Evaluate your current situation

This Questionnaire is for those of you studying or following an apprenticeship in Creative Industries. It will give you an overview of where you are now, whether you are going in the right direction and help you to clarify how you envision your future.



**Write the answers in your notebook.**

Take your time with this, do it over a few sessions if it is too much for you in one go.

#### Look at your current situation in detail

##### What do you enjoy about your apprenticeship/studies?

- What do you enjoy most about your studies and why?
- What modules or lessons are you looking forward to?

##### Any worries?

- What at the moment do you think is not working so well and what do you think are the reasons for this?
- What worries you the most for the future and your career?
- What do you do when you are unable to resolve a problem or have a mental block?
- Do you tend to solve problems alone?
- Do you talk this kind of problem over with someone else?
- Can you think of a situation that you did something different to solve a problem?

##### Anything is possible!

- Do you have a vision or dream for your future, if so, what is it?
- If you had a magic wand that could guarantee the success of a project or an idea, what would you choose to do?

##### How are you creative?

- What have you observed about the following?
  - Your level of self-confidence
  - Your motivation
  - The kind of problems you find difficult to solve
- What do you like doing in your free time?
- What does Creative Thinking mean to you? Do you apply it in your professional and personal life? If yes, how do you apply it?
- When you were younger, what was your favourite game or activity?
- Do you still do any of these playful activities now? What ones?
- Did you have a favourite teacher? Why did you like them?

Did you discover anything interesting or useful from your answers?

Sometimes it can be useful to take some time to assess your current situation. It is also good to remember who inspires you and why, what can you take from that and apply to yourself right now. Does it help you to remember your aspirations?

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 5c. Find Out What You Need For VET Tutors

#### Evaluate your current situation

This Questionnaire is for you if you are a VET tutor and work with apprentices and people who are training for a career in Creative Industries. It will give you an overview of where you are now, clarify your motivation and inspire your vision.



**Write the answers in your notebook.**

Take your time with this, do it over a few sessions if it is too much for you in one go.

#### Look at yourself as a tutor in more detail

- What do you do to keep training and learning to improve your skills?
- What aids /resources do you use to keep your knowledge updated? Journals, books, the Internet, refresher courses, on line courses?
- How much time do you normally dedicate to training and learning aimed at your own improvement per month?

#### What do you enjoy about being a tutor?

- What do you enjoy most about your work and why?
- What new projects or developments at work are you looking forward to?

#### Any worries?

- What at the moment do you think is not working so well and what do you think are the reasons for this?
- What worries you the most for the future and your career?
- What do you usually do when you are unable to resolve a problem or have a mental block?
- Who do you talk this kind of problem over with?
- Who do you talk this kind of problem over with?
- Can you think of a situation that you did something different to solve a problem?

#### Anything is possible!

- Do you have a vision or dream for the future, if so what is it?
- If you had a magic wand that could guarantee the success of a project, what project would you choose to carry out?

#### What have you observed about your trainees/students?

- What have you observed about the following?
  - Their level of self-confidence
  - Their motivation
  - The things, ideas and people that inspire them
  - The kind of things they find difficult to solve
- What do they like doing in their free time?
- Since you became a tutor have you noticed any changes in your students and their level of engagement, commitment etc.

**How are you creative?**

- What does Creative Thinking mean to you? Do you apply it in your professional and personal life? If yes, how do you apply it?
- What do you like doing outside of work and why?
- When you were young, what was your favourite game or activity?
- As an adult do you still do any of these playful activities?
- Did you have a favourite teacher? Why?

Did you discover anything interesting or useful from your answers?

Sometimes it can be useful to take some time to assess your current situation. It is also good to remember who inspires you and why, what can you take from that and apply to yourself right now. Does it help you to remember your aspirations?

## Making Learning Stick

### Aim

The aim of this part of the HCT document is to help you to reflect upon and consolidate all the things you have learned, both theoretical and practical, about Creative Thinking. It can sometimes be quite a challenge to apply something you have learned or studied into a real situation. In this document are some handy hints and tips to help you make your learning stick!

### Reduce That Text!

Reducing the amount of text we have to read through and re-read through also reduces the amount of time we need to spend doing it! A large proportion of text is actually unnecessary in that it communicates very little extra meaning. Therefore, when you write your notes try to avoid using words that do not add value (pronouns, articles, auxiliary verbs etc).



#### TIP

**You can also try the technique of summarizing the concepts in a sentence no longer than 25 words. With practice it's possible to summarize some very complex ideas!**

### Open Doors With Key Words

Key words can often help us to retrieve information in that they are able to spark off a whole series of connections in our brains – when combined with other memory aids, they become extremely useful. For example, if I remember a key word and know that I need to be able to say five things about it, I will probably be able to describe everything without having to refer to notes.

When you first start taking notes in the form of key words rather than phrases or sentences, you will probably feel a bit insecure – don't worry this is normal. You may forget one or two details at first, but you will soon get used to this method. Any time that you may lose at the beginning will be made up for in the future by reducing time for note-taking and reviewing.

### Make Mind Maps®

Mind Maps® are a learning tool created by Tony Buzan, [www.buzan.com](http://www.buzan.com) they are a great way of summarizing knowledge and have a number of advantages over traditional note-taking. These include:

- Text limited to key words
- Text distributed horizontally and vertically
- Use of colours aids memory
- Possibility to include diagrams to aid visual memory
- Flexible – easy to add in new information

To find out more about how best to use Mind Maps®, try consulting the following link [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind\\_map](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_map) or run a web search.

If you know how to use them but tend not to, ask yourself, 'Why?' and try to overcome any obstacles which may be in your way.



There are also a number of Open source applications (free software on the web) available to help you mindmap digitally – try looking them up at <http://sourceforge.net/>

### Everything Can Be Retrieved

Simply put, retrieval is a process of accessing stored memories. There are four basic ways in which information can be retrieved from our long-term memories.

**Recall:** the ability to access information without being prompted. E.g. answering correctly a spontaneous question.

**Recollection:** the ability to reconstruct memory, using logical structures, partial memories, narratives or clues, a bit like piecing a jigsaw together.

**Recognition:** This type of memory retrieval involves identifying information after experiencing it again.

**Relearning:** involves relearning information that has been previously learned, thus making it easier to remember and retrieve information in the future.

### Problems With Retrieval

We've all had that tip of the tongue experience – we know the information is there but something prevents us from accessing it. Don't worry, research has shown that this is quite normal. However, to improve our retrieval we need to work on making the connections as strong as possible.

### Smashin' Scope

Have you ever wondered why we remember some things more easily than others? There are many different possible reasons why something is important for us and we can play with these reasons to help our memories make things as retrievable as possible. One such technique is to create a strong image and/or association with the idea that you want to remember. The type of image we can create should be based upon the following factors, all of which are great aids to memory:

**Synaesthesia and Sensuality:** Use all your senses and be aware of your body's position.

**Movement:** It's often easier to remember a scene from a film rather than a still image – make your image move.

**Association:** What you are trying to remember should be associated with something you already know.

**Sexuality:** We all have a good memory when it comes to sex, so use it!

**Humour:** The more ridiculous and funny, the easier it is to remember.

**Imagination:** Let yours run wild!

**Number:** Numbering things and counting them will help enormously.

**Symbolism:** Makes things more interesting and create more connections in your brain.

**Colour:** Use all the colours to colour your image.

**Order or sequence:** When you memorise a sequence, your brain follows it by taking you through the logical steps.

**Positive:** Make your images positive and pleasant. Better to remember happy things.

**Exaggeration:** As far as possible, exaggerate your images.

For more about smashin' scope look here [www.buzan.com.au/learning/smashinscope.pdf](http://www.buzan.com.au/learning/smashinscope.pdf)

## Memory And Mnemonics

Mnemonics are memory tools that rely on associations between easy-to-remember constructs that can be related back to the data that is to be remembered. We are all familiar with common mnemonics which we learned at school, here is an English one, **Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain**, for the colours of the rainbow, perhaps we don't use them enough for our own personal study. As you come across items you would like to remember try creating a rhyme or useful acronym to help you remember them – it's worth the small investment of time.

## Review 24/7

To study without reviewing is a pastime rather than a constructive activity. Mental connections in our brains need to be created and maintained. Some theories say that we never actually forget anything; we simply become incapable of retrieving the information!

For this reason it is a good idea to regularly review the things we have studied. Try using the review 24/7/1 technique:

When you have studied something and made some notes about the key issues, review the notes **24 hours** later. Review them again **7 days** later and again **1 month** after the first study session. This regular review combined with effective study techniques should make the information much more retrievable.

## Make It Visible

The expression, 'Out of sight, out of mind' is fine if you want to forget something, but the exact opposite is true if we want to remember something and this is particularly true in the digital age when things are 'hidden' on our hard drives! Here are a few tips to help make what you want to learn more visible:

- Stick your notes & Mind Maps® on the wall – the bathroom is a good place!
- Make study cards that you keep in your pocket – you can then read them on the bus!
- Keep a notebook with all your notes on the theme of Creative Thinking. Make it as attractive as possible and keep it in your bag.

If your notes are in digital format, create a screensaver with them; try this application from one of the HCT focus group: [www.myideasbook.com](http://www.myideasbook.com)

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## Getting Into Habits

We all develop study habits when we are at school and then continue this for the rest of our lives. Some of these habits work and some do not work. Whether a habit is good or bad, most of us have difficulty in changing them. In addition a general tendency to give up on new ideas and techniques as soon as we encounter the first obstacle, can make it difficult for us to change our learning habits.

If you want to get rid of a bad habit or introduce a good one try to write down your resolution on a piece of paper and keep it in a visible place. When you write it, remember to say why it is important to you (save time, be more efficient etc). Every time that you feel yourself slipping back into the old habit or not trying out the new technique, stop and remind yourself of your original aim.

## The Right Mood

Study plans are great as they give us a structure in which we can take action and set ourselves achievable goals for the time that we have available to us. To make the plan work we need to be self-disciplined. If for whatever reason, stress, tiredness, worries etc. means we are not in the right mood for studying or learning we should not blindly press on. Stop and ask yourselves the following questions:

- Do I need to study today? If no, take a break, but remember to revise your study plan.
- If yes, is there anything I can do to make the studying more enjoyable? If no, take a break, but use a bit more imagination next time!
- If yes, do it and enjoy your studies!

Remember a good study plan needs to build in elements of flexibility

## The Dangers Of Multi Tasking

We've all heard about it and we are all under pressure to be good at it but recent studies are revealing that we very rarely multitask; we actually switch tasks in rapid succession. This switching has high costs for most people – mental set-up time, lack of memory regarding tasks carried out, mistakes made etc.

When you want to do some serious studying or learning why not sit down and switch the phone off? If you use your pc, switch off your e-mail and don't log in to your accounts. Concentrate on what you want to study, enjoy it and learn it!

## Study Buddy

When we start of on a new course of study, be it formal or informal, we usually have a high level of motivation. This motivation will usually fade away over a period of weeks or perhaps even months when we follow a normal classroom based method of study. However, when we move into the realms of self-access study, most people find that their motivation falls off very quickly.

If you are in this category get yourself a 'study buddy'! This doesn't necessarily have to be someone who studies the same things as you, though it is important that they know that you are studying and that at times you will need to go to them for advice and encouragement and to talk about your achievements. You should also give them permission to check up on you and make sure that you are actually following your study plan. If you can't find a buddy, try to find one online.

# CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

## Module 2: Applying Creative Thinking

In Module Two you'll find more in-depth exercises, tips from others and questions to help you to discover how to move your thinking forward whether you run a small business or have just started an apprenticeship, you'll find something useful here.

### In this module we will look at the following

- Thinking in an organised way
- Taking the first step
- Finding inspiration
- Meeting Others
- Thinking with objects
- Playing with your problems
- Moving thinking forwards
- Creative Thinking for Business



### The aims of module two are

- Develop confidence in using Creative Thinking
- Applying Creative Thinking in your profession, business or studies

The exercises don't need to be done in any specific order, start with the one that you find most useful for your situation; we do recommend that you try all of them.

Where necessary we suggest a time limit for an exercise, or you can do them at your own pace.

Now that you have worked through the activities in Module One, you should be more aware of how you usually solve problems and how you think. We have looked at how to create the right environment, how to ask open questions, organise your thinking etc. The activities in this module will help you to apply and develop these techniques.

# CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

## 1: Thinking In An Organised Way

In this activity we are going to look at the technique we used previously in **Module One/worksheet 3: Explore An Object**, in the first exercise the object we explored was a cooking pot. This time we are going to apply the same technique of structured thinking to explore an issue or challenge that you might be experiencing in your profession, apprenticeship or trade/craft.

### Here are some challenges that might sound familiar

- I don't have enough time
- How do I compete in a global market
- I don't earn enough money relative to the amount of work I do
- I might be made redundant at my college/educational setting
- I can't motivate myself to study
- My overheads eat into my profit

On the following page you will find a sample questionnaire from our recent research of the applied arts sector. We have chosen one problem that you might have experienced yourself as an example: **Not earning enough money**

We will go through the steps of exploring this issue in an organised, structured way. If you don't identify with this issue, you can apply this technique to something more relevant to you.



### Prepare yourself

- Make sure you have the environment right, clear your desk, and even put a piece of plain paper on your desk to define a working area.
- Switch off your phone (yes, you can!)
- Ignore the email box on your computer (or even switch it off)
- Put a **do not disturb** sign on the door
- Relax and get a cup of tea!



## How To Explore And Query In A Structured Way



### Write your answers in your notebook

The challenge we will explore is:

### Not earning enough money

#### The Facts

1. Lets look at the facts around that first. For example How much do I earn at present? Do I cover all my costs? Do I have enough money during my studies? Etc.

#### Feelings

2. How do you feel about this subject? No long explanations just one or two words for example, I feel worried, I feel stressed, I feel insecure etc. You can also feel how the issue makes you feel physically speaking.

#### The Benefits

3. Now we are going to look at the benefit of the issue. This is more difficult, sometimes the benefits are hidden and you need to make an effort to find one, so think positive here. A possible example could be, "I don't waste money on things I don't really need"

#### Risk & Caution

4. Next we look at the risks of this issue, are there any negative consequences or something we need to be careful about. For example, "I can't save money to invest in new projects"

#### Creative Thinking

5. Now that we have thought about the important aspects of the problem, the facts, benefits and cautions, we have some space to have fun and be creative. What can we come up with to solve the problem? Think of the most daring ideas! Example, "Instead of working 60 hours a week, I work 55 earn roughly the same and dedicate 5 hours to developing Creative Thinking!"

#### Next Steps

6. Inspired? Has your outlook changed about the initial issue? Are there any ideas you want to take further and put into action? Make a list of ideas that are possible and explore them further.

Now use this method to explore an issue you are currently facing in your work, profession or studies/apprenticeship.





### **TIP FOR TRAINERS**

It might be useful to do this 'Thinking in an Organised Way' activity in a group.

Ask the questions in a structured way, be aware and try to direct participants so they don't return to the previous question, allow each participant to express their ideas; don't let big personalities take over!

If it is your first time with this type of activity, prepare some examples beforehand; try them out first as it will help you to feel relaxed and confident.

Don't lose those ideas!

Write down all the ideas the participants have suggested, let them choose the ideas they want to develop further, remember CRAZY ideas often lead to interesting solutions!

# CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

## 2: Taking The First Steps

### Taking Action

Being creative as a craft person, artist or inventor does not mean that you are able to automatically transfer your creativity to other areas of your profession or life. It might be easy for you to come up with new ideas when creating a new product but when it comes to marketing, writing an essay or sorting out your finances you find these areas difficult and often avoid them!



**TIP!**

### ONE SMALL STEP...

This **TIP** will help you to get over the first hurdle of taking action. Use it the next time you avoid starting something that needs to be done!

Often, just getting started on a task or a job that you find challenging can be difficult; we tend to avoid these jobs until the last minute which makes them even more stressful. If you take a small physical action it can help to break the cycle of not starting or avoiding a difficult task. The physical action should be something small, un-challenging like getting the folder you need, looking for a telephone number of a client etc.

For example, if you are avoiding doing the book-keeping and accounts:

- **Say to yourself ‘I will just get the accounts folder out of the filing cabinet’, then go, and do it!**

Having a manageable deadline can kick-start an action. So give yourself a time limit for the initial physical action:

- **Say to yourself: ‘I just will spend 5 minutes on this’**

Once you start an action, it is easier to keep going.

### Where might this work for you?

- Making calls to clients
- Doing coursework
- Researching new markets
- Changing your designs

### One more tip regarding TIME

*Time yourself when you tackle something you don't like doing. Notice how long it takes you until you get the result you need. Often it takes less time to actually do something than to keep on thinking about getting it done. What's more, it's a lot less stressful.*



## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 3: Finding Inspiration

#### Who Is Your Hero? What Inspires You?



Let's look at the people and things that inspire you, they will all have certain characteristics that you value. It could be a person, for example your grandfather, or even an invention like the telephone. Thinking about what inspires you can help you to remember what your own motivations and aspirations are.

This activity is important as it makes us think about what is important to us as people. This kind of self reflection can often lead to renewed vision and resolve when facing difficult challenges.

Think about the people and things that inspire you



**Write or draw your thoughts in your notebook.**

Try and answer at least two of the questions and see if you can find any connections

- Who would you say your role model or hero is? What is it that you like about them?
- Is there a group or organization you admire? Why?
- Do you have an object or invention you really like? Why is that?

Have a look at what you have written. Is there a common theme or word that keeps coming up? Can you make any connections?

If you can then these are values or objectives that you align with, how can you use this information? Imagine if you used the values you admire, how would you solve a problem with them? If your company has a vision, are these core values included in that vision? If not, work on including them.

#### My role model for example is...

My role model is Gareth Edwards - a famous rugby player from the seventies who despite being extremely skilful was always very modest.

An organisation I admire are the Barbarians Rugby Club - a club that has no ground and is virtual. There is no fixed team and people play upon invitation. They hold true the spirit of the game, play to the rules, and look to entertain the crowd with nothing but their prowess.

An object I like is an old Land rover - good, reliable and designed for a very specific purpose and met all requirements and lasted a long time.

**Common theme** – quiet excellence and honour

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 4: Meeting Others



#### Finding Your Community

Here we would like to point out the value of being connected to a community, like-minded people with similar visions, skills and challenges to yours, or even different people. Richard Florida suggests that a mixture of skills, vision and talent can very often lead to a more creative communities. Knowing and connecting with others can be incredibly inspiring. Being connected locally, nationally or even internationally via the web can allow you to contribute to a wider demographic and broaden your vision and outlook.

#### Keeping it personal

There might be groups of like-minded people in your local area and one way of making connections is via your local council or formally organised craft guilds etc.

#### Formal groups

Here are some examples for the UK and London:

- Heritage craft association
- Crafts Council England
- Arts and Craft organizations like Cockpit Arts, Metropolitan Works.
- Magazines or publications like Craft and Design, Artist Newsletter

#### Informal groups

- Street of small shop owners
- Café societies

#### Your online business community

The Internet is a useful source for finding things out and sharing. It makes it easy to find the information for all aspect of your life and work. If you need help with a problem or issue you will find tips from experienced, generous people and support organisations.

If you are not doing so already, we encourage you to surf the net and google topics that are of interest to you or can offer solutions to the challenges that you are facing. This could be general information on Learning, Marketing, Management or Business Development. In online forums you can ask other people questions or share your thoughts. Blogs are a great source of communication as well.

## ONLINE

There are many inspiring websites, which cover creativity and Creative Thinking that are worth checking out. To make a start finding useful connections you could:

- Make a list of the kinds of groups and people you like and would like to be a part of; they might be local, national or global!
- Choose one or two groups from your list that you really feel drawn to and would like to know more about, it could be the ones that are the most relevant at this moment in time.
- Start finding out more! Make a note of what you discover and any connections you make, you can review your progress on a regular basis. Are you getting what you expect from your groups? Are you contributing? What action might be needed to get the most out of your groups?

To start you off here are a few websites/blogs we found interesting:

<http://greenwood-carving.blogspot.com/2010/01/apprenticeships-in-traditional-crafts.html>

<http://www.lateralaction.com/>

<http://nicolawood.typepad.co.uk/>

<http://www.tribe.net>

<http://www.linkedin.com>

<http://www.artigianatoartistico.com>

<http://www.eubusiness.com>

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 5: Thinking With Objects

#### Making new connections

This exercise is a playful way to come up with ideas and can be used in a variety of areas, for example, to develop new products, improve designs or manage your resources.

#### Is it a joke?

Why is a joke funny? There is a story that makes perfect sense until the punch line takes us in an unexpected direction and makes us laugh, for example:

What vehicle wobbles and flies? **A JELLYCOPTER!**

In this exercise we will use two different objects to take our thinking in an unexpected direction. By themselves the two objects make complete sense, they have their function, are made from a specific material and behave in a certain way.



**Write or draw your thoughts in your notebook.**

Let's start

Look at the this picture

Think of as many new ways to reinvent and redesign the pencil.  
The craziest ideas are accepted here!

Give yourself about 3 minutes

On the next page you will find the second part of this exercise.



### Next: Take A Diversion

In the following part of the exercise we use random objects to increase divergent thinking, so...

Look at this word and picture

## MOUSE



Think about the mouse, its size, skin, where it lives, what it does, how it moves and then come up with more new ideas and functions for reinventing the pencil.

### Give yourself 3 minutes

You can also find funny random words from this web site:

<http://watchout4snakes.com/CreativityTools/RandomWord/RandomWordPlus.aspx>

### Other Ways Of Making New Connections

Here are two more ideas to divert your thinking

- Make static objects move - e.g. combine the characteristics of a bicycle with the ones of a cup.
- Transfer big to small and vice versa - What would happen if this thimble, a small object were as big as a house, what could it be?



### Think of a few more!

This might be a good list to have in your notebook for future reference.



## TIP FOR TRAINERS

Try this exercise in a workshop with other trainers or apprentices. Use materials that are familiar and that you usually work with and combine them with random objects or materials.

Try to encourage the participants to think about the objects as if they had a different scale for example, what if a hammer was the size of a house?

Looking at the limitless potential of an everyday object can expand divergent thinking,

“What if” is a great way to query and explore the everyday!

## Get your hands on a new idea!

This is another great exercise for when you want to explore new ideas, for example a design or a product you want to improve. Maybe you are ready to embark on a new challenge and want to invent something new or original

## Play With New Ideas

If you produce things for a specific market or target group, often you will need to come up with new products and ideas, or maybe you want to improve your existing material. This is a useful activity to spark inspiration.

In this exercise you make or re-invent your existing product by using a different material. You might discover innovative new ideas by experimenting or playing with an unfamiliar or unusual material.

For example if you are a ceramicist, make a product out of:

LEGO

SUGAR CUBES

SAND

FABRIC



## Write your thoughts in your notebook.

In your notebook write your own list of alternative materials you can use to re invent your product. Choose one of the materials and re-invent your product in 2d or 3d.

- Think about your product or design.
- Write down as many different materials you could use to re invent your product or design.
- Which of these materials inspires you to remake your Product or design?
- Choose one and have a go!!



**TIP** Do this activity with a child as your buddy!



### **TIP FOR TRAINERS**

Use this activity with your colleagues or apprentices, asking the participants to work with the challenges they face when they are creating a new design or creative work. Encourage them to think first about the functionality of the product/design, reinventing it in a different shape perhaps and then thinking just about the design, thinking of changing or altering the scale. It will help them to focus on the possibilities of the object (Creative Thinking) and not focus on the original application or usage of it.

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 6: Get Playful with Those Challenges!

#### Play With it!

When we remember to play we can escape into imaginary worlds and even the craziest ideas can become possible.

When you were a child what was your favourite toy, was it Lego, a guitar or objects from around the house?

Did you make things, play music or did you kick a ball around?

Being absorbed in an activity that we enjoy can lead to unexpected outcomes or solutions.



#### Prepare yourself

Even when we just want to play we need to make time for it, so switch off your phone and computer, prepare a space to play and leave about 20 minutes for the activity.

You need to get the materials before your start and have them ready to go in the space you work in.

#### Play with it

In the questionnaires worksheet in Module One you took a closer look at yourself and described your plans or vision for the future.

In this exercise you can explore these future visions further in a playful way. You can be as inventive as you like and come up with your ideal scenarios. Be daring, courageous and follow your inspirations.

If you have not answered the questionnaire from Module One now is a good time to do it!

**Here are different ways in which you can create a vision for yourself. Choose the activity you like most.**

#### Make collage

Get some magazines to find images and text. Get a large sheet of paper, don't glue anything down, just arrange the design on the paper, in this way you can change your vision and move it around. The process is often more interesting than the end product.

#### Build it with objects

Collect objects and materials from home, college or work. Build the scenario on a piece of paper. You can also take photos from different angles, a great source of inspiration!

#### Write a silly song or poem

Get your guitar, keyboard or a few pots will do and put the glorious story of your future into a funny song or poem.



### **Case study**

Binita is an architectural glass artist and the creator of My Ideas Book. She participated in the HCT focus groups and the testing of the manual/modules in London.

Binita has been a practicing artist for fifteen years working in architectural glass. Much of her commissioned works came via architects and she was very successful during the last 8 - 9 years. Due to the recession and the current economic climate she realised that the credit crunch had truly settled in and that there would be very little public art opportunities available in the UK.

**Binita realised that there would be less work opportunities but couldn't see another solution as to how to move forward or to generate more work for herself, she was stuck.**

During the HCT focus group workshops she experienced the power of Creative Thinking, given some simple tools she was able to free her mind allowing new ideas and thoughts to flow through. Afterwards she said "I felt elevated and alive but also like I had been asleep for the last 10 years." Some time later she was sitting in a café and was using some of the Creative Thinking tools and had a eureka moment, She decided to develop a new web based thinking tool herself for creative people called **My Ideas Book**.

<https://www.myideasbook.com>

**Creative Thinking allowed Binita to generate lots of ideas and focus on one that would work.**

## Play With Your Problem

When we have a problem it can be hard to think outside our usual patterns and often we can only think of solutions that are familiar to us. Looking at an issue from different perspective can help you to tackle it and to take positive action

### Imagine your problem from a different point of view

#### 1. It's not your problem

What would you tell a friend when they ask you to give them advise about a problem?

Imagine an issue that is on your mind is not yours, but is the problem of a close friend. What advice would you give your friend? Think of the different aspects of the issue, it might have hidden benefits; you might want to point out some pitfalls in a plan or come up with unusual solutions.



#### 2. It's not a problem

What would happen if the problem you are facing is not really a problem because you are sure that that you can face up to it and achieve the results you want?

Imagine a skill you are very confident in and everything related to it is easy for you. For example, you are a carpenter and enjoy working with wood. In this exercise imagine you could transfer your confidence in a skill you like to an area you generally find problematic. How does it you feel when you are working with confidence and enjoying yourself? What would you need to change so that you can get the same feeling in an area you feel less confident about?



#### Write your thoughts it in your notebook.

In your logbook write down a problem you have at the moment, try to keep it to no more than 10 words. Next think of a good friend who often comes to you when they have a problem.

Write down the name of your friend underneath your problem, imagine this problem is theirs. What advice would you give them?

This will help you to be more objective about your problem.

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 7: Moving Thinking Forward

#### Experiment and Evaluate

Always evaluate in an open and honest way. Evaluation is important especially when we want to develop something new or move ideas forward. This exercise shows you a very quick and simple method to check what worked and what doesn't and to come up with methods to move forward.

Evaluation can be used for all situations:

When you experiment with new ideas for products or with new materials

After a meeting, either with your boss, tutor, students, employees or business partners

After introducing new strategies or methods

#### Evaluate

Write your evaluation in your logbook when you try out a new idea, or a after a product development meeting. It's good to get into the habit and take the time to consciously write down what worked and what didn't and then to come up with new solutions.

This evaluation doesn't take long. It is good to give yourself a time limit, not longer than 3 min to answer each question.

1. How did you feel after the situation or event? Just one word that sums up how you felt at that moment. Don't write down any justification, for example, I felt elated or I felt deflated.
2. What worked well and why?
3. What did not work so well and why?
4. How could you have done it differently, (crazy ideas are welcome!)?
5. Reflecting on what you have just written - what will you do next time?
6. What do you need to put in place to make this happen?



#### TIP FOR TRAINERS

After the end of a training course, dynamic evaluation sessions with the participants can help you to better understand their feedback and to plan the next range of activities to suit their needs.

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 8: Creative Thinking For Business

#### Welcome To The Business Section Worksheets

As we explained in the HCT manual, Creative Thinking can enhance your business activity in different areas. Before we consider some specific areas it is important that we understand some characteristics of Creative Thinking, which will help you to move forward.

A person using Creative Thinking does not encounter **problems** but sees **challenges**; usually we use the word 'problem' as a reason for something not to be done. Instead, applying Creative Thinking enables us to see challenges instead and perhaps transform them into opportunities. With Creative Thinking we do not experience **failures**, but instead we could have learning experiences.

Indeed Tom Peters, an American management guru says: ***'Fail, celebrate failure, learn from failure then move on.'***

Someone using Creative Thinking techniques has the possibility to transform what others may see as a failure into a more positive enriching experience.

#### Success story

Here is an example of a failure turned into a success:

The invention of the Post-it notes. This was the outcome of a failed attempt to create the strongest adhesive on the market and became 3M's most successful product!



Very often you come across people who are dogmatic and 'fixed' about their ideas and ways of doing things, we could call this state ***I am my position***. Usually such people are inflexible and make it impossible to consider new ideas or new ways of doing things. When you apply Creative Thinking you are open to input and ideas from many sources and will consider any idea no matter where it originates.

When we hear someone suggesting a new idea, we are often quick to judge it and usually do so in a negative way. As a creative thinker you learn how to postpone judgement, give new ideas time and then be positive and objective about your opinion. Giving space and encouraging other people is contagious and helps innovation to grow.

The first step in applying Creative Thinking in your business is to **focus**. A good starting point is which sector or issue in your business you would like to apply Creative Thinking to, being clear and focused at the start of the process will help you to obtain maximum impact

Creative Thinking has 3 very important disciplines

- **Focusing**
- **Applying the appropriate Creative Thinking tool**
- **Dedicated time available**

Another important factor is perception. According to research done in the United States, 80% of thinking errors are errors of perception. That's to say that we tend to observe and perceive things that are often based upon our own previous experiences, and develop beliefs based on those experiences. All of this means that we can miss important things when observing and trying to understand certain situations. You think you see a particular situation, you decide according to what you see, but in fact your perception might have been wrong from the start!

It is very important for anyone using Creative Thinking to be able to visualise a challenge from different perspectives. Or even to turn an idea around until you find a possible opportunity in it. This is a skill that can be developed over time. You could practise this by looking at your product from different perspectives, you could do this physically, you could imagine it from the viewpoint of a child, you could imagine it used by a different client group etc. and observe its different potentials.

For Creative Thinking to take place one of the main inspirational drivers is **provocation**. If we accept the status quo nothing will change. A goal of the Creative Thinker is to transform or create something and generate added value in the process.

When using provocation we simply add **what if?** For example:

- **What if my ceramics are developed into a piece of furniture?**
- **What if my carpentry is turned into an experience?**
- **What if my hairdressing is combined with another service?**

The following worksheets will help you to explore Creative Thinking for your business

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 9: Develop Your Product

#### Product Development

Ongoing product development is one of the core challenges of any applied arts/craft business. There is an ever-evolving situation in which consumer tastes, technology and new methods of manufacturing are constantly changing, coupled with increased competition due to globalisation.

A good idea is to try and regularly challenge yourself to develop new products/services and create a portfolio instead of just relying on a single type of product.

#### Reflection

- How long have you been making your current product? Have you ever improved or changed it in the past? Why? Did the changes work or fail?
- If for example you dismantle your product into its different core elements, could you improve or modify any of these elements? If yes, how could the improved/modified elements be assembled/combined? Could there be new opportunities to develop something further?
- New technologies are constantly being developed and made available, could you incorporate any of these technologies within your products?
- Customers today are not only looking for products but also at a product experience. Can you turn the manufacturing process of your product into such an experience?

#### Provocation



**Write your thoughts it in your notebook.**

In your logbook write down as many ideas as you can for the following.

Assume that as from next year, the demand for you product will not exist anymore. How will you use your existing skills and competencies to develop something new?

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 10: Getting It To Market

#### Marketing



One of the challenges that a small business often faces is the expansion of their client base and breaking into new markets. In this activity it is important that you can define clearly the existing boundaries and current size of your market. For example: Is your market local, national or international.

It would also be useful if you could identify the different types of customers who buy your products and your services.

Once you have thought about that, you could start to provoke and challenge the characteristics of your existing market.

#### Reflection

- If you currently sell your products to clients who visit your workshop, can you think of any ways to find distributors and retailers to sell your crafts in other areas, maybe nationally or internationally?
- Maybe you currently sell your products as single stand alone items. Could your product be integrated with another product/service where both items reinforce and support each other?
- If you sell to specific customers, could you identify methods of scaling up or multiplying, for example in the hospitality industry or in the leisure industry or perhaps museums and heritage centres.
- Have you ever considered forming a business cluster and combining with other people making similar products to undertake a joint marketing effort?



**Write your thoughts in your notebook.**

In your logbook write down as many ideas as you can for the following.

Imagine you hear that in India there is a craze going for the type of products that you produce. How would you begin making yourself known and break into the Indian market?

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 11: Managing Those Precious Resources

#### Management of Resources

The primary resources of any craftsperson or designer maker are:

- The **location** where they operate
- Their **tools** and **equipment**
- The **time** they can dedicate to their craft/skill
- Employees, clients, and other associated **people**
- The **materials** and **resources** needed to produce their products
- Their **financial assets** such as loans, cash flow, access to credit



These resources need to be properly managed to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

#### Reflection

- Are you creating enough time and space to think creatively?
- Do you use your resources to their full potential? Is there a period in which your resources are not used? If that is the case, you have what is called **surplus value** and your business can actively benefit from this. How can you utilise this surplus value and turn it into revenue? For example you have a kiln that you fire once every two weeks, could you negotiate with others who need a kiln to pay you for firing their work when you are not using it.
- Is there another person or business with whom you can co-operate and share your resources?



**Write your thoughts it in your notebook.**

In your log book write down as many ideas as you can for the following.

You have acquired a large warehouse that is too large for your current needs, but you plan to use it in the future. How will you utilise it for your present needs in a way that is sustainable in the short term?



## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 12: Getting Your Message Across



#### Communication

Communication can be a major challenge but also can be seen as an opportunity in the current dynamic, economic climate. Depending on the size of your enterprise you may need to take care of internal communication, dealing with employees and suppliers, as well as taking care of external communication, dealing with your customers. Digital technology has given us excellent possibilities of expanding and facilitating inexpensive communication.

#### Reflection

- Are you creating enough time and space to think creatively?
- Listening is an important aspect of communication. How much do you listen to your employees, service providers and clients?
- Have you ever turned a complaint or negative comment into a business opportunity?
- Have you explored the possibilities that information and communications technology, particularly the internet, can enhance your communication with your current and prospective customers?
- Your product is also a source of communication and it has an impact on your customers through its quality, packaging and presentation. Have you ever focused on these various elements that make up your initial product?



**Write your thoughts in your notebook.**

In your log book write down as many ideas as you can for the following.

Imagine that you need to describe your product to a visually impaired client. What would you tell them?

## CREATIVE THINKING IN ACTION

### 13: Working Together

#### Have You Thought About Working Together?

Within this section we would like to highlight the importance of cooperation and working with your creative 'community'. It is a key factor in tackling those hurdles that seem difficult to overcome by yourself.



There are two main factors that support all kinds of collective working. The first one is trust, without which you cannot share new ideas and develop your collective objectives. The second one is a common vision; this is essential for defining what working together will achieve and the common route that needs to be taken.

Working together can also be a stepping-stone towards inspiration and knowledge sharing. You will have the opportunity to think about new possibilities that might otherwise not have occurred to you.

#### The Beauty Of Diversity

Diversity is the key to achieving a strong co-operative partnership. We usually work with other organisations or individuals' working within our sector and this is useful when trying to access new markets, share knowledge or to expand possibilities.

However, in order to develop new ideas and possibilities, it is important that we work collectively with other organisations different from our own. This is where the power of Creative Thinking comes into play, when it enables the creative potential of different organisations to work together.

#### The European Enterprise Network

The European Enterprise Network (EEN) is a European wide initiative supported by the European Commission that supports the cooperation between enterprises at a European and International level. The EEN can actively support you in finding partners for your cooperation ventures and also guide you towards obtaining funds for your ventures.

Within your region there is an EEN office that can provide support and you can find your closest local branch by going to

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/>

You can also find other similar organisations by searching on the Internet. It is a useful source for finding things out and sharing ideas.

### **Business Case Study**

A micro- enterprise employing 7 workers, which produces and sells pottery products for the local tourism market, is encountering competition from companies that are importing similar products from low cost producers in Asia.

If the company continues to compete on a production cost basis it is liable to encounter serious financial problems. The company has been trying to lower costs for the past months but it has now reached a point where it cannot lower costs any further. The owner of the business feels that his customers do not appreciate the authenticity of his products and only look at the price.

After some research on the Internet he found a report from an association of tourism operators regarding the aspirations and characteristics of tourists. He found out that tourists today are not only looking at prices but also want to have an authentic experience of the place they are visiting.

He decided to conduct a Creative Thinking session with his employees focusing on the challenge and making the following provocation. "What if we turn part of the workshop into an experience?"

During the Creative Thinking session the group looked at how they could make an experience involving pottery. How will they convert part of their workshop? Is there enough space? Will this change have an effect on productivity whilst it is being undertaken and what will be the amount of investment they would need to undertake? They analysed the benefits of this change.

The micro-enterprise expanded its workshop and created a section where visitors can see pottery being made, learn the basics of making pottery and make their own pottery whilst having the possibility to buy from the company's shop. This has given the company a unique selling point that their competitors importing from Asia cannot provide. It has also given their clients an authentic experience enhancing their sales and solidifying their position in the market.

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- Finconcept (Steve Williams)
- The World Centre for New Thinking (Joseph Woods)
- Edward De Bono
- Sir Ken Robinson
- Innovation Union
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## Glossary Of Terms

### **After Action Review**

Technique used to examine what happened during any chosen action in order to be prepared to make adjustments to improve next performance

### **Applied imagination**

Creativity – imagination on its own has no external value. It is only when we apply imagination that we can create something and generate value

### **Closed language**

Language, which tends to direct the people reading or listening e.g. Are you intelligent? Will tend to elicit a yes/no answer. See Open language

### **Comfort zone**

An imaginary space where we feel safe and unchallenged because we already know how to deal with anything that is likely to happen to us. When we step out of our comfort zone we experiment something new

### **Convergent thinking**

Thinking which is analytical, usually deductive, in which ideas are examined for their logical validity or in which a set of rules is followed

### **Creative industries**

Range of economic activities that are concerned with the generation or exploitation of knowledge and information. Also referred to as the cultural industries

### **Creative Thinking**

The mental process of generating new and original ideas that have value

### **Creativity**

The application of imagination that results in a tangible product especially in the artistic field

### **Critical thinking**

The mental process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion

### **Divergent thinking**

Thinking that moves away from standard trains of thought in diverging directions so as to involve a variety of aspects and possibilities. This may lead to original ideas and solutions

### **Innovation**

The introduction in a given context of something new. True innovation is the introduction of completely new ideas, concepts and their products that have not been used elsewhere.

### **Kinaesthetic**

Related to movement – in the sphere of learning we talk about people who aid their learning through the use of movement, touching and manipulating objects etc

**Lateral thinking**

See Divergent thinking

**Learning style**

The way in which someone learns. We all use a combination of different styles of which some will tend to dominate individuals according to their past experiences.

**Mental block**

When something prevents you from moving forward with your thinking – you tend to run over the same thoughts again and again

**Open language**

Language that tends to offer the people reading or listening different ways of replying e.g. how are you intelligent? See closed language

**Paradigm shift**

A change from one way of thinking to another. First coined by Thomas Kuhn in 1962

**Sensory learning**

The ability to learn through the use and exploitation of the five senses

**Six Thinking Hats®**

A thinking tool developed by Edward De Bono which helps to remove ego from discussions and encourages Creative Thinking by separating out thoughts into six broad categories: structure, facts, positive thoughts, negative thoughts, emotions and opportunities

**The Capture System®**

A thinking tool developed by Capture Arts, which encourages Creative Thinking in both children and adults

**Thinking tool**

A technique, which can be used to help direct thinking towards a 'solution'. Tools may or may not involve tangible items (questionnaire, materials etc.)

**VET**

Vocational education and training where there is a heavy emphasis on a hands on approach, making the training less theoretical compared to an academic approach

## About the partners



### **CESIE – Project coordinator**

CESIE- European Centre of Studies and Initiatives – is a non-governmental European, none profit, secular and independent organisation established in 2001. It is committed to the promotion of cultural, educational, scientific and economic development through the use of innovative and active tools and methods, implementing projects and research at local and international level.

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### **Capture Arts – Core partner**

A not for Profit Arts Collective based in London, UK. Capture specialises in Creative Thinking and education / arts projects. They work on a local, national and international level.

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### **Euromed Connect – Core partner**

EuroMed Connect Co-op is a co-operative based in Malta, which focuses on idea generation, project development and training. It also promotes the active use of Creative Thinking within public, private and non-for-profit organisations at a national and international level.

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### **SENECA – Core partner**

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