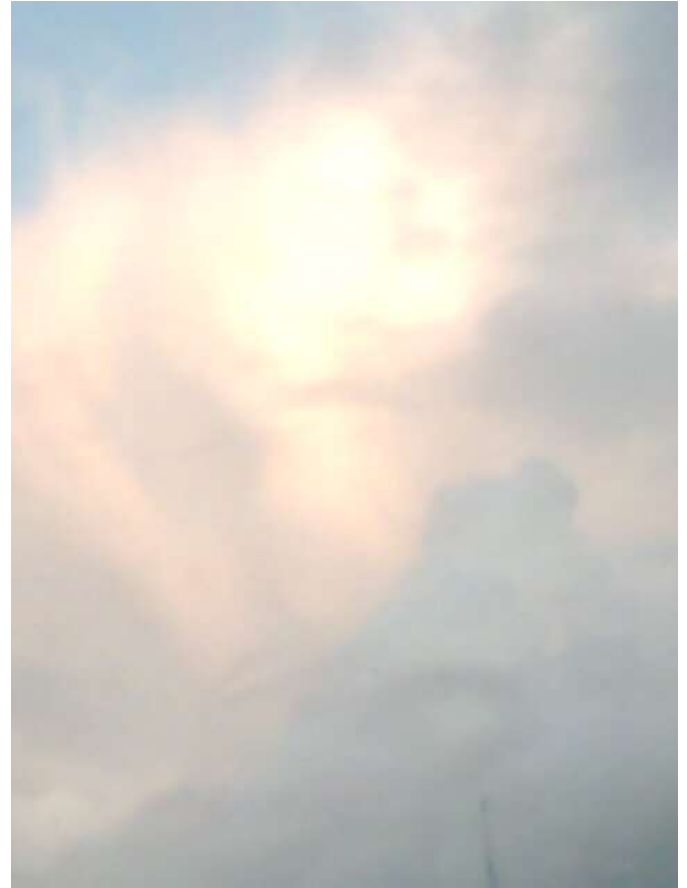


Become a Creative Thinker (and doer)

- A ten week course in creative
thinking.

By G.L.Everine



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Intro

You know those creative light-bulb moments where you suddenly get a good idea? Whether you are envious of those who have them or it is a long time since you had one yourself, this course is for you. This is to train your brain to think creative in different circumstances. Because that what it is. Training. *You* can have those light-bulb moments and you can have them more often when you train your brain to think creatively.

What it is to think creatively?

I like to think of it as to know there are other solutions out there, even if they may be a bit out of the box. It is to know that there are other ways of doing things. To know that the way you are currently walking isn't the only one. When you reach a dead end to know there are other options out there, you just haven't seen them yet.

You get introduced to different types of creative thinking and using them in certain situations. It is a ten week course with an optional weekly challenge. I hope you can set aside the urge to do getting it perfect. Allow yourself to make mistakes. This is about training and not so much about doing it right.

Week 1 – (The) Observation

This week it is all about observing. Take a day in your shop where you observe your daily routines. Is your routine rigid or loose? Do you take a pause from the routines at some point? How is your energy through the day? How do you end the day?

After you are done that then come back here and answer these questions:

-How do you greet yourself and the staff in the morning?

- What is the first thing you do? What is the second thing you do when you get in?

-When you take a pause from the routines, do you feel it is a needed break from the shop?

As in being dis-connected from it mentally?

-Does your energy follow a typical pattern with an energy burst in the morning and dipping off throughout the day? With what activities is your energy highest? With who is your energy highest?

-Who ends the day? Who closes up? Do you take your work with you or leave it behind? How do you feel when you get home? Relieved? Already dreading another day? Or energized? If so of what?

Your' Day

Morning – What changes can you make that would make your start of the day a little better?

If you start your day alone then try to think of something you can do to cheer yourself up. As in for example having a funny calendar or post-it notes with positive affirmations.

Work- What did energize you again? If nothing, then try to be on the look-out for even the smallest thing. How can you expand on that? Can you bring something from your private life that energizes you into your work? Or partially include a hobby that you like?

Pause- Try to observe of what you need the pause from. Are you physically tired? Is the workload to much? Is it a specific task? Certain people?

Work- Try to change one or all of these three and see what happens:

-What that is been done

-How it is been done

-Who is doing what?

What can you add that brings more joy into the daily routines? What would make it easier?
Are they the same thing?

End- Getting out of the door and closing doesn't always feel like you are ending the day. Being in a work mode can still linger. How you end your day sets the tone for the start of the next. What would help you to sum up the day before you finish?

Make a note of what has been good, what has not worked and what needs to change.

What tasks can you do at the end of the day that makes the start of the next day easier, so you don't dread it?

You spend many days and hours working and having a good set of daily routines is crucial to your well-being. They are like small drips of energy-boosts that gets you through the day and work like anchor points to lean to when things are tough.

If you find that you are stressed, frustrated, tired or even numb, take a closer look at your routines. Routines are there to support you, not to break you down and make you feel miserable and like a failure.

Different set of routines

Routines can be so many things. It is a system that you repeat to achieve certain things. Routines can be there to cheer you, achieve certain goals, work like anchor points when things are rough. As in I know that if I follow the routines everything is going to be ok.

So these are the first questions you need to answer:

- Why do I have routines?
- What do I want them to do for me?

A set of routines can be anything from detail planning where you set up an annual goal, then break it down into milestones, monthly goals followed up by weekly and daily planning.

Then you have the more roughly to achieve a certain goal a week, but doing it more when it suits you.

Planning it by the months can also be done as in a 6 month plan or a 3 month plan.

Find out what really suits you. If something isn't right then perhaps it is time to change the routines or adjust the goal or perhaps even how you achieve it.

Oh, and have you noticed something? You might have two different types of routines. One for your personal morning routines and another when it comes to work. Maybe you have a more loose personal morning routine, but a rigid routine at work?

Challenge – Follow a completely opposite routine than what you have for a week and see how it feels. If you have a detailed plan now, then set up a goal for the week, but not when you are working on it. Or if you have a more loose weekly plan now, then look up some organizing tools and set up a plan for the week ahead. After the week, evaluate.

Create a completely new set of routines for yourself and follow them a month. Evaluate it at the end and see if it still suits you or if you want to switch back to the old.

Week 2 – Observe Consequence

In last week the *Observation* was more of a personal and close up involvement. This week it is more of a quiet from a distance observation. This one is about changing one, minor thing. Then you step back and observe the consequence of it. Simple, yet interesting.

Have you through the last week thought hm, I wonder if I should or I wonder what would happen if. Well, this is the week to do that.

Choose three situations where you are curious of the outcome. This is not about making a permanent change, so pick something where you can easily change it back.

This could be changing a physical item say the colors of the napkin if you own a cafe, changing behavior such as check- up routines or customer relations. Or if you want to test out a new product or service on a small basis.

Challenge – After this week, think of one bigger change you could make as an experiment that would have a bigger impact on your business.

What consequence do you expect to see with this change?

Can you see if you can find shops that is about to make this change or something similar and make a guess of the outcome. Then come back to it after a couple of weeks.

Were you right? What would you have done differently?

Outcome Consequence Chart

Action	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Intensity 1-5

Week 3 – Practical Problem Solving

When it comes to creative thinking, this one might be the one that first springs to mind. This is a more typical approach and it is often used and referred to when people talk about creative problem-solving. However here it is a significant difference. Creative problem-solving can be used in all sorts of areas, including the more theoretical one, as you get introduced to later. This week it is the emphasis on solving mostly *practical* problems in a creative way.

Think of three problems you want to deal with this week. Try to find problems you have here and now and one that you had for a long time that has been nagging you.

7 Ways to deal with practical problems

1. Fixing it- repair the problem
2. Re-placement
3. Substitute
4. Re-route – work with what you got
5. Re-configure- re-construct it to be used somewhere else
6. Add/Extract – add something or take away something
7. Problem – re-defining
8. Crises Management

1. Fixing it

Fixing it refers to when something breaks down.

It can be a whole item or a situation where it breaks down or parts of it that needs fixing. This is about fixing it. Meaning repair it to make the originally item or situation work. Ask yourselves these questions: What exactly is broken? How can it be fixed? What do we need to fix it? Where can we find what we need to fix it? Who can fix it if we can't fix it ourselves? Where can it be fixed?

If you are stuck, get inventive with the what that can be used to fix it. The who can fix it and where you can find parts you can use. Say who is the least you expect that can fix it? What places haven't you yet considered because they seem unlikely to find anything?

After Covid lock down, businesses had problems finding people to do the jobs. They had to look somewhere else to find people to hire. Teenagers and pensioners got hired. And you found a lot of cross-over, people from other professions that were not related at all. Like an accountant who had cooking as a hobby got hired as a chef.

2. Replacement

Replacement is where you try to find a similar item to what is broken. The question is *how* to get a replacement and what you consider to be one.

The easiest way to replace an item is to buy it new from production or start all over again, but sometimes this isn't possible.

Is it possible to buy it new or used from forums where people buy and sell? Are there any such forums/channels or other arenas you have missed? (What about police auctions?) Can you borrow it from someone? Or find one recycled or at Oxfam? Antique shops?

If you are stuck here, the trick is to get more inventive with the questions where is the most unlikely place to get a replacement and who can know about unlikely places? Does anyone working in the profession of the item know? Do you know of someone who uses one?

Re-placement can be also be about re-placing the place where it needs to be done or who needs to be re-placed when people leave. Who do you consider as an unlikely re-placement, but has the same qualities? Which place is an unusual place, but can work?

3. Substitute

Substitute is where you try to find a similar item close up to what is broken to fill that function instead. Say your professional coffee machine is broken and you can't find a replacement. What this means is that you want to find another machine or something similar that makes professional coffee.

If you are stuck here remember what function the item you try to find a substitute for has. In this case it is to make exceptionally good coffee.

What would you say define the quality of the product you need to substitute? As in this example what would you consider to be good coffee? What other ways are there to make the same quality product? In this example what other ways are there to make good coffee? Are there other alternative methods that produce the same end product?

In this case it could be to boil a kettle over an open fire.

If you still are stuck try to re-define what is constituted to be a substitute. Could another hot beverage do the trick instead? Or does it have to be a hot drink, maybe a hot meal with a cold drink?

4. Re-route – work with what you got

This is where something either fails to turn up or where something goes wrong.

First questions that pop up when these situations occur can be what do we do, can it be fixed if not can it be re-placed or find a substitute? When all these fails you are left with a situation where you have to figure out a new way of making use of what you got left. Meaning what to do with the leftovers.

Ask these questions:

What else can it be used to? What other uses has it? What can be added that would make it better than before? Who could benefit from the mistake? Who can now use it that previously couldn't?

Or this one, pretend it is not a mistake, but some new experiments instead. Or how about marketing it as it is, as a mistake? I call it real marketing. In the garden-centre where I trained as a gardener we sold ecological apples. They sold well, but we got worried people got disappointed when they discovered the apples were full of faults. We put up a sign that they were ecological apples and full of faults. We thought it put people off. Instead they sold out in minutes.

5. Re-configure- re-construct it to be used somewhere else

This could either be to try to re-configure what went wrong in the previous or it could be to find redundant items or parts of items. (This approach could also work in more complex and theoretical problems as in projects, groups or work- situations.) Some might say that this is the primarily example of creative problem-solving.

-Is it a specific problem you could adjust it to?

-When adjusted, is it a specific use you have in mind or is it more general?

-Is it possible to adjust it and find out what you can use it to later?

This one is more challenging than it looks. Not so much in the adjustment itself, but in order for this to work you have to be able to see what situations it can be adjusted to and to accept that it is useful after it is adjusted. In the most extreme example if you have watched a TV-series of some people who are extreme savers. (Can't remember what it's called.) The one who saves on the water-bill by doing the washing and bath at the same time. If you have that in mind it can be difficult. I like to think of other more delightful examples such as re-building a trailer to a mobile home. Or using a big spoon as a bird-feeder.

6. Add/Extract – add something or take away something

Sometimes it isn't working because it is missing something. Or something isn't working simply because there is too much of it in it.

It can be a big “something” or a little “something”.

Try not to add or extract too much at the same time. Test it again after adding/extracting one thing. And sometimes we talk about both adding *and* extracting.

Think of a problem you have. What do you consider to be the main core of this? Not the main core of the problem, but of the item or the situation. What can be added that will improve it? What little thing? What big thing?

What can be extracted that will enable you to focus on the main core of the item/situation? Let's say you are struggling to do your job properly. Adding something could be a tool or a new soft-ware. Extracting something could be the opposite and simplify it so you can focus on your job.

7. Problem – re-defining

Here it is about figuring out what the real problem is and/or finding solutions that doesn't involve the problem or annul the problem altogether.

Let's say you are about to get to work in the morning and the car won't start. At the first glance the problem is that the car won't start. Well, it is, but the real problem is that you want to get from A to B. Finding answers to this gives you more options, for what can get you from A to B? Get a lift, hire a car, take the bus, walk, bicycle or motorcycle. If the initially answers doesn't help then try to widen your scope. Here it could be a horse, a boat, plane or tractor.

Finding a solution that doesn't involve the problem would of course be to call in and ask for a home-office day. A solution that annuls the problem would be to quit your job and start a business from home or switch job that doesn't involve getting from A to B in the morning.

Sometimes when you can't figure out what the problem is it can be interrelated. Like a cake that consist of different ingredients. What you are trying to solve consist of several different pieces. Maybe one or more of them is faulty.

8. Crises Management

Sometimes you have to deal with crises and be a creative problem solver when the crises occur.

Ask yourself what is priority number one?

Damage control, stabilize the situation and get help.

Where or what is the damage?

What can you do to stop it? Temporarily, immediate damage control.

Customer control, Reassure that you look into it, offer a substitute or get in touch at a later point or days later. This to give you some space to get an overview of the situation.

When getting help for damage control, it helps to delegate and be specific. What you don't want is someone else coming in and take over. You don't need that. It was you who spotted the problem; it is YOU who need help with practical problems. You don't need help to boss others around. That is your job. You have already begin to boss others around, so when another person steps in and also begin to boss people around it creates chaos, which makes the situation worse and doesn't help anyone.

Challenge – When a situation occurs, try to use one of the methods. Or if you want, all of them. Either at the same time at the same situation or try different ones to different situations. Notice which one works best and which one you prefer. Are they the same? Does one problem-solving solution works best in certain situations? Are the ones that are more general?

Week 4 – Re-arrange

This week it is all about re-arranging your shop. And I say it just like that as if it is no bother. Ok, so what if I say it is about taking a closer look at the arrangement in your shop and making a plan of how to do it better.

What do I mean making a plan? I mean arrange your shop consciously to meet your customer flow. If you have no idea what I am talking about then let me try to explain. Take a look at your supermarket, where you do your weekly shopping for groceries. Do you think it is all casually set up? Think again. Especially if it is one of the bigger chains. Their layout of the shop and where the groceries are put is all well planned. When I say customer flow I mean how do your customers walk through your shop when they move naturally/organically? When they first enter your shop, do they turn right, left or go straight forward? What are they looking for when first enter? Second? What do they pick up?

What do you have in your middle shelves? What have you placed in the same height as the eyes? Notice next time you are out shopping for food and take a closer look at what is put in the middle shelf, (the eye-catcher what they want to sell to you at this time) and what is at the bottom and the top.

See if you can make a drawing of the layout of your shop floor. If you prefer take some pictures of the layout as well. There are some programs out there where you can play with layouts and designs of rooms. Otherwise simple programs such as Paint will do for now.

Have a think of your customers and in which direction they enter and walk further into your shop; right, left or center. Then think about what they are looking for when they enter your shop. Is it the first they see or is it difficult to find? What do you want it to be?

Is your shop designed for this?

Some like to arrange their shop to adjust their customer flow so it is an easy and pleasant experience. Others like to put obstacles or bumpers to stop them in their track. Some shops that sells cheap items they like a messy shop with lots of bumps. This to give the customers a feeling of reward when they have to dig to find a bargain.

What would you prefer? Or more precisely, what do you think your customers would prefer?

Another thing to think about is when does your customer come? At what time of the day? What mood are they in, are they invigorating or exhausted? I mean if they come after they done their grocery shopping on a Saturday they are less likely to be in the mood for searching for their items.

Are you a bits and pieces arranger?

If you are then you re-arrange your shop to fit new offers. This could be seasonal, sales-campaigns or new items you want to show.

Take a look at the layout in your shop. Is it possible to set aside a specific area for these kinds of arrangements? And make an overall plan for the rest of the shop?

Now think about these three points:

1. What items do you use to draw people in? How do you arrange it?

(Ones I was on a stand to represent the Gardening School I was educated in and it wasn't until I made some faces made from vegetables that people stopped. It was literally eye-catching.)

2. What is the physical object in your shop that stops them in their track? How is it shaped, size, colour etc. What items do you display on it?

3. What products do you have in the middle shelves that are in height with the eyes?

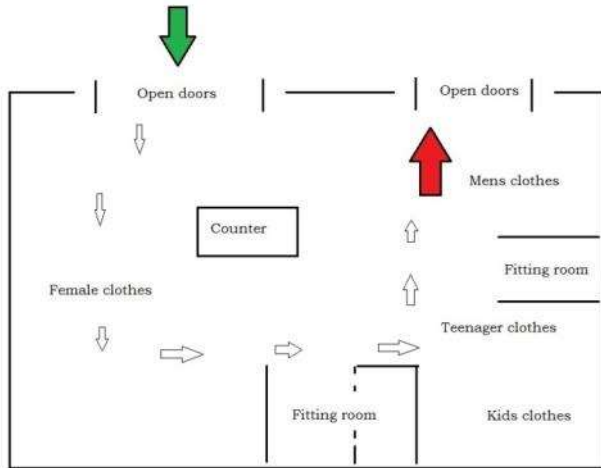
Challenge – Despite of all the well made plans, sometimes the ones that works best is the personal from the heart ones.

I know this sound daft, but try to walk in your shop for a moment from a customer view-point. Is it easy to walk in your shop? Does something irritate you? Are there any physical objects that stop you in your track; is it ok or not?

Re-arrange it as *you* want it to be. Make it personal.

#4 Customer Flow Chart

Layout of an actual shop, selling clothes to all groups and ages.
Selling modern and in reasonable price range.



Entry point



Exit point



Direction of customer

This is a **PLANNED** customer flow. The ideal customer is a woman and is walking into the shop where the green arrow is. Then following the imagine arrows around the shop then walks out where the red arrow is.
In reality non of this happened and it were utter chaos.

What would you have done?
It is suited in a small shopping-centre, direct opposite of it is a supermarket and a little cafe.

Week 5 –System Organizing

This week it is about how you organize the work. (I won't repeat the definitions I read because they were so complicated with sentences longer than mine. Some were even untrue.)

First take a look at what system you have in place already. If you don't know, that's fine. You get a chance to work through it now.

Look at these points:

What work needs to be done? What is directly related to the business and what is not?
Who is in charge of what?

You can break it down into a year, one month, a week and one day. Work your way up by looking at one day first, then a week, then a month and then a year. Or pick one of them.

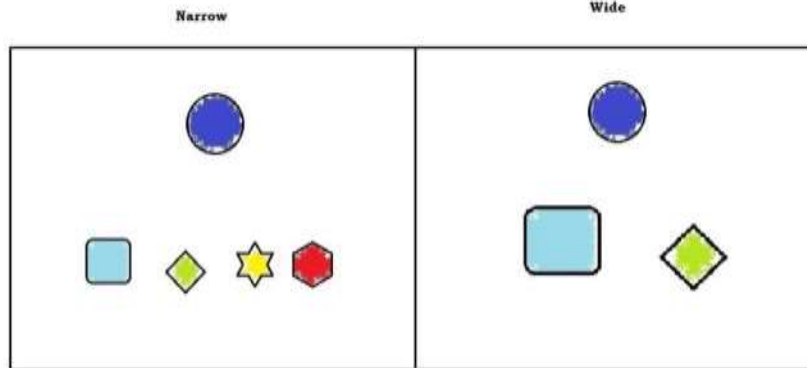
This is not about setting up a detail plan. See what categories and group you can put the work in. Is there a difference between categories and groups in a week and in say a year? (If you only picked one of them, then skip this one.)

By now you have a rough idea of what work that needs to be done, what is related to business and what is not and finally who is in charge of what. Do you manage to put it all in categories or was it difficult? It isn't as easy as it looks is it.

Ok, so take a closer look again. Is the system, the way of organizing it, more focused on the practical part or the more relational, more abstract ones or is it a mix? There is a difference between putting the actual items out in the shop and talking to the customers. A title such as shop-floor manager is more practical focused rather than being in charge of customer relations.

Here is another question: Is it more focused on the work that needs to be done or the person who's doing it? Many work-places are organized around the persons who work there. They get into trouble when one quits because it feels they are taken so much of the workplace itself with them. It can change the whole business. Then again, a place that is focused on the actual work can feel a bit in-personal and cold. You don't feel you matter too much because it seems it doesn't matter who is doing the job. The feeling of being easy replaced can linger. One last one, is the scope of the work narrow or wide? Is one person in charge of a little area with a wide variety in the tasks? Or is a person in charge of few varieties in the tasks, but more of them?

#5 Scope Narrow or Wide



Person in charge

A large blue circle icon with a white border, representing a person in charge.



Type of work where the size indicates the amount

Challenge - Take a closer look at the appendix for week 5. Pick one and organize your work accordingly. If you organized the work in this way, how would it affect the daily life?

-What way of system organizing is closest to the work as it is now?

Week 6- Business Strategy

Business strategy means making a conscious choice and making a plan in which direction to steer your business. The strategy part is the why behind it and what to do next.

You may think of strategy as trying to come up with a clever move to what to do with the business and the challenge is to figuring out what the clever bit is.

Well, you are not entirely wrong, but a clever strategy can might as well be connected to *your* why, which is the frustrating part.

The motive behind a business-strategy can be to make money and survive. But this is not about traditionally business strategy. This is about innovative business strategy. Meaning doing something cutting edge or carving a way that makes your business stand out. Having an innovative strategy doesn't always mean to be loud and making a big deal out of it like Richard Branson. An innovative strategy can might as well be done without all the big leaps and heavy marketing campaigns. Here a local shop that sold groceries and hardware did a genius move a few years back. When I say local I mean a little or average country grocery store with their food prices a bit higher than the no less than three chain supermarkets just five minutes away. Of, course it didn't go well, but then a new manager took over.

He noticed that a bit on the quiet while their better half were shopping for groceries, the men went to the backyard, to the hardware store where they also sold nails and planks and woods for DIY (do it yourself). You know, all that you need for the happy hobby-builder. Taking a closer look at the accounts it turned out that the income for the two parts of the shop were almost equal. Then he made a move to focus on the hardware part and having a strategy to take care of the hardware customers and sort of let the other customers that shopped for groceries to take care of themselves. He made a business motive to be a shop where the customers in the hardware part of the shop would be met by homey, kind carpenter service personnel. The shop quickly got a reputation where the service and knowledge of the people working in the hardware department got highly praised. Then he did a smart move and opened up the hardware part early in the morning. (Really early...) And you know what; men with their trailers formed a queue before they opened. They enjoyed taking the early morning trip for themselves and saw it as a nice way to start the day. By having this strategy and focus, the grocery part of the shop also got more income because they shopped for food afterwards. And it went well for the little country shop. As of today, last year they moved across the road and opened up a brand new little shopping-centre of their own. With a smashing new supermarket and of course, a big hardware department.

When creating an innovative strategy you can do as this manager did and single out the loyal customers that give you an income and focus on them.

Which focus do you want your business to have? What do you want to focus on; where do you want the focus to be?

A) Money

B) You

C) Service/people/community

D) Trendy/innovative/cutting edge

E) Climate/environment

Choose one to be your main focus-point then include the other.

An innovative business-strategy involves a new way of using these or a major change in them:

-The way it is done

- The why

- Where you want to go

-What do you have to offer that is unique to you? What does your business have to offer that is unique? What do you want your business to be known for? What hasn't been done in your field that you can do?

Challenge – Try to create a strategy for your business where you focus on how you want it to be. Not what you think it is best for your business or according to the market and so on.

-What would your strategy be like if you were to do the opposite of what is usual in your field?

Why do you run a business?

What do you love about it, personally and about the business itself? How can you enhance it?

What customers would you love to have? What do you like about the customers you have?

What would you love to do for your customers? And finally, what role would you love to have?

PS! As always I recommend creating a strong business-identity because business-identity and business strategy are strongly linked. If you are not sure how, try out my method by using *'The Fortune-teller Model'*.

Week 7-Strategic Innovation

Strategic innovation means an innovation that is aligned with your business strategy and it is meant to give you a competitive edge above your competitors.

Or it is tactic where you form a strategy in alignment with the innovation.

An innovation is usual a single item that is tangible such as a new product, new design or a new app.

You can also take something that is a trend and make your own version of it.

What problem in your shop do you see? What problems are there in your field?

How can you make the shopping experience better for your customers?

What problem do your customers have?

Of course there is a fine line between a stupid idea and a brilliant one.

It has to make some sort of sense for the customers. It can't be too complicated or too difficult and it has to be somewhat clear of why this is a good idea.

If you are unsure and want to try it out, test it on someone in all of these groups:

a) Your basic customer

b) One that you know that has difficulty using your innovation. (If you innovate something in tech then try it out on someone who struggle with it.)

c) On an expert in the field

d) Your ideal user for it

e) My favourite; random test group where you show it to a group of people and see which one likes it.

Challenge – Try to think of one innovation that is in line with your business strategy.

And then one that is in your field, not in line with your business strategy, but where you can adjust to it later.

Then try to think of three other innovations which you might have wondered if they would work or just something nagging at you. Daft or no daft. Don't judge, don't elaborate, just write it down.

For instance making your own brand of environmental friendly clothes. Or high-tech, smart clothes. New smart shopping carriages.

(Innovation can also be to invent a new system.) Are you scared of making a fool of yourself? Afraid of become one of them you read of that announces big, odd ideas. Thinking they are on to a good thing, only they are making a fool of themselves and their great idea is just daft. Everyone else can see it, but them. Here is what you can do to avoid that. Now you have say five ideas. Put it on a list where you can easily see it. What you do next is to keep your eyes and ears open in the next months. If you see a business that has done something similar to one of your ideas or the basis of one of your ideas is mentioned. Or all of a sudden the very idea you have is a “thing”. You know that you are on to something and you can take it further.

Week 8- Wild Ideas

Have you ever tried yoga? On paper it sounds relaxing until you realize it is about enduring excruciating, painful stretching. It is not until you done it a few times and the body get used to the stretching, you can enjoy it. Thinking of wild ideas is a bit like that. On paper it sounds like it is no big deal and it is just about having a laugh. Funnily enough it is not as easy as it sounds. Wild ideas way of creative thinking is often used in brain-storming sessions and is the go to method for finding solutions. Although it may look like it is easy, it is the most difficult method of creative thinking. If you are not used to thinking of wild, out there ideas it is difficult to think of one. And if you do come up with one your logical side of your brain kicks in to tell you how stupid you are and all the reasons why you should not do this. Further, your brain goes so now you see how ridiculous this idea is then why should you think of it? You are fighting against your own brain “immune” system sort of speak. The other is hard to not just laugh it off and be silly about it. Why should you do it then?

I can give you two good reasons; one is that it can be the very thing that gives you that competitive edge. The second is that the wild idea could be the solution you need to get you out of a crisis. If you are worried it can help to think that this is only about thinking of ideas and you can adjust the ideas later.

What's the difference between strategic innovation and wild ideas?

Strategic innovation is aligned with your business strategy or is connected to some form of strategic thinking.

Wild ideas don't have to be that at all. They don't have to be connected to your business even.

Ideally a wild idea is not connected to solving a specific problem.

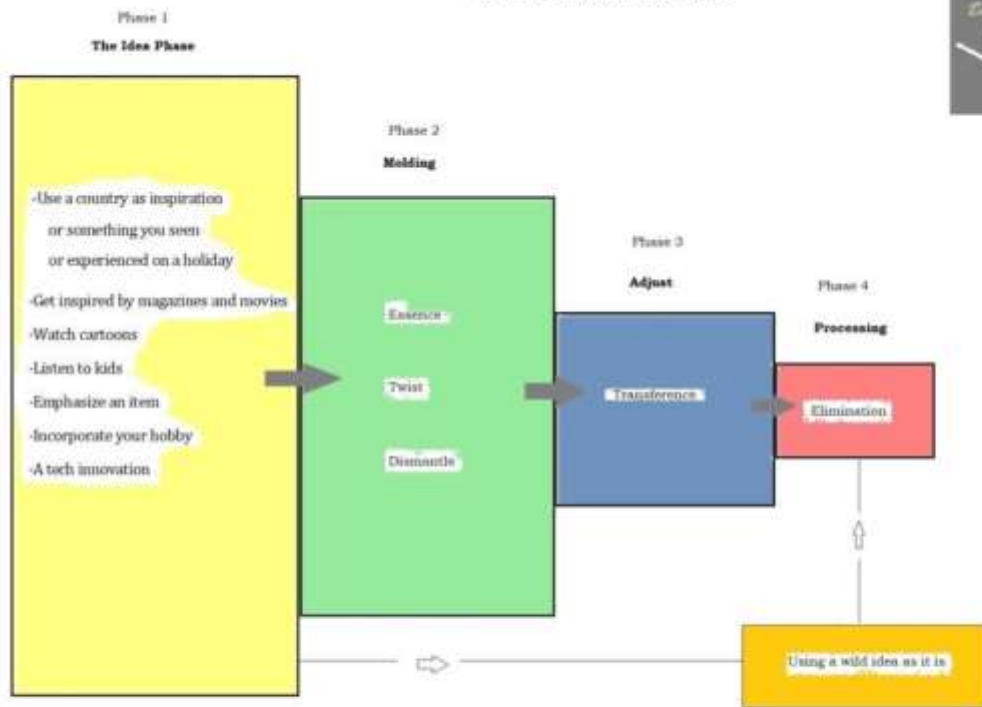
When you have wild ideas, do you think of the big ones that takes a lot of organizing and a lot of effort and money?

It doesn't have to be. Wild, big ideas can also be the quiet ones.

Serving people only in the late evenings and nights. Having a quiet shop. Throwing all the furniture out of the shop and having only movable shelves, just to mention a few.

Wild Idea Flow Chart

#8 - The Wild Idea Flow Chart



To help you coming up with and work with wild ideas you can use this Wild Idea Flow Chart where the process of finding and working with wild ideas goes through four phases.

Phase 1 – The Idea Phase

To help you to come up with a wild idea you can use one or all of these angles:

- Use a country as inspiration or something you seen or experienced on a holiday
- Get inspired by magazines and movies
- Watch cartoons
- Listen to kids
- Emphasize an item
- Incorporate your hobby
- A tech innovation

As a further example I will use my idea of hot-air balloon restaurant.

Phase 2 – Molding

This is where the idea goes through a molding phase. You take a closer look at the idea to see what it is exactly and what you can get out of it.

The Essence

A hot-air balloon restaurant. What is the essence in it?

Well, restaurant, food. Air, being up in the air. Serving people, serving people food.

The Twist

Change one or two things about your idea.

Here it could be to put the hot-air balloon on the ground and make it out of wood.

Or the tech approach, making into a computer game.

The Dismantle

Dismantle the idea into the bits of what it consist of.

Hot-air balloon, food.

As you can see this is not about making a long, complicated list.

Phase 4 – Adjust

The Adjust phase is where you adjust the idea to fit in with your business.

Look at what you noted in the *Molding* phase.

Can you transfer any of these to the business?

-Restaurant, food. Air, being up in the air. Serving people, serving people food.

-Hot-air balloon on the ground and make it out of wood.

-Hot-air balloon computer game.

-Hot-air balloon, food.

-A way of transfer this idea would be to make the interior and decoration in the shop more “airy” and light and spacious.

-Serving people beverage, light snack or some tea/coffee.

PS!

Put together your type of shop and what you are selling with one thing in the idea.

*Let's say you sell clothes. This would look like clothes + hot-air balloon = hot-air balloon clothes.
And before you laugh at it I know per today H&M are selling exactly that.*

Phase 4 – Processing

Now you can make a list of all the ideas that came out of it.

Don't forget to add the original idea.

Elimination-list:

-Hot air-balloon restaurant

-Hot-air balloon on the ground and make it out of wood.

-Serving people beverage, light snack or some tea/coffee.

-Make the interior and decoration in the shop more “airy” and light and spacious.

-Hot-air balloon clothes.

Now put a minus beside the idea(s) that you immediately see is going to cost too much or don't fit in. Then put a number beside the rest after what you prioritize.

Challenge -

Try to come up with three out there ideas and work through them using '*The Wild Idea Flow Chart.*' One for your personal life, one that is connected to your shop and the third is a more general wild idea that in itself is just wild like the hot-air balloon restaurant.

Week 9 – Personal

This book can be quite challenging. Whether you are used to thinking creative or you can't stand it. You might then be one of them who read all the way to here without actually done anything. I get that.

The week ahead then might be more for you where you can try it out in your personal life. After that you can begin from the beginning and work your way through it or you can try out one of them and see how it goes.

There are three different creative rehearsals for you to try out in your personal life. You see if you try out only one of them or all of them. I also added one of my earliest one, *'Building a Bird-feeder'*. I wrote that ages ago, but still find that useful.

Then when you feel you are ready for it you can start all over again at the beginning. Try out as many as you like to help you getting used to thinking and using creative thinking in your life.

Creative Rehearsals

The White Room

If you are not used to thinking creatively it can physically feel like it is out there somewhere.

Take one room in your house, flat or wherever you live and move out everything that's in there. This room can be small like a broom closet or big like a bedroom. If you want to you can now paint it white. Ceiling, walls and floor. Only if you want to and if it helps, because the title of this rehearsals is a meant more as a description of an empty room.

Now this room is going to be your creative space for a week or two. No, I don't mean that you are to use it as an "office" for your creative hobbies. I mean to use this room itself as a creative canvas/space. And no, not as storage room either. Paint the ceiling as Michelangelo. Use it to show slideshows. Express something as an out there art where you stick it on the walls. Take a mattress in there and sleep there for a night and see how you feel the next day.

Play with it.

Explore your hobby

Take a hobby you have or a favourite thing you do that makes you relax. Then you take this week to explore new and untried varieties within it. Say if you like fishing then try out different ways of fishing that you haven't tried before. If you like to take a spa then explore different types. Get curious.

Invent

Invent something that would help you in your private life or you could think of something regarding your business.

Think of a physically problem you have in your life. What design, item, combinations, would make this better?

You could think of a problem and see what to invent to sort it. Or you could take an item and see what other usage it has. The idea here is not to come up with innovations to actually use. It is purely a mental one. This is to train your brain to think creative. If you only come up with an idea say a robot shopping-assistant, that's fine.

'Building a Bird-feeder'

Let me say this straight away, it isn't fun to do this one.

It is frustrating and stressful. You feel useless and not good at anything. And if you think you are a peaceful person, think again.

Good luck!



Step 1-Find a Problem

Today you are going to think of a specific problem you want to solve during this course. You can take up the challenge and build a bird-feeder as I did or you can take a look around and see if you can find another. This can be in your house, your garden or your car. It doesn't have to be a big problem as long as it is specific and a practical problem. It also have to give you room for being inventive. Installing a new oven is specific and practical, but there really is one way of doing it right. Decorating the walls however gives you room (literally) to play with.

To sum it up:

It is an actual problem (something that needs to be fixed), third parties will be using the solution, and the solution is open for interpretation.

Step 2- Obstacles

When you have decided on a problem think of the biggest practical, obstacles you will face.

Make a list in your head of all the criteria the solution have to meet in order to be solved satisfactory.

When I built the bird-feeder the solution had to meet these criteria:

- Wind, to resist storm and hurricanes.
- Hold out rain and snow.
- Be safe from cats.
- Keep the crows and magpies out.
- Easy access to food to the smaller birds.
- Have an attach mechanism of some sort.

(A solution to attach the bird-feeder to a tree or to the ground.)

Every bird-feeder I made had to meet these criteria in order to be a success.

Step 3-Solutions

Come up with as many different solutions as you can. If you are afraid of messing things up and what the third part user will say you can explain it to them up front what you are doing. In other words that they shouldn't expect a perfect outcome, neither should you, because that is not the point. Right, back to the solutions. Do you have a fair idea of some solutions? Don't think of how or don't think them through. This is quite important, because if you give yourself too much time to think it over the chances are that you dismiss your ideas when you can't see how or you think they will take too much time, be too difficult and other excuses.

Put the timer on and don't think of more than one minute on one idea. When you roughly have an idea, make a note and move on to the next.

Step 4- Implementation

Before you start get whatever tools you need for the job. Choose one of the solutions and do NOT think the solution through. You are only to think of the next step, what to do next without thinking of what the fully consequences of that action might be. Think of the next step and do that. Then the next step and do that and so on until you think you are finished or stuck. And here is the most frustrating part: You are not allowed to go back and fix it when you realize you made a mistake. If you realized you made a mistake figure out what you can do next to make it better. When you think you are finished, or can't think of the next step you can move on the next solution. The more solutions you can do the better. And to make it a bit more stressful, you can set a deadline and you have to finish one solution in an afternoon. If you have encountered a big project you can stretch it to a weekend.

(You can see my poor attempts on the next pages.)

Step 5- Evaluation

- * How many times did you throw the tools out of the window, or wanted to? And how many times did you feel that the solution had a life of its own and changed from being brilliant to be something from 'Gremlins'? (It is a movie from the 80's for you who don't know.)
- * How many times did you feel useless, inadequate or like a fool?
- * How many times did you get angry with me for telling you that you couldn't go back and change your faults?
- * How many solutions did you actually finish?
- * How many solutions did you actually come up with? Were you surprised how much you struggled to twist your brain?
- * Was it any indifference between the solution that you preferred and the solution the users of your solution preferred?
- * How many criteria did the solution that the third party preferred meet?

My Attempts of Doing “Building a Bird-Feeder”

Finding a problem wasn't difficult. I needed to build or get a new bird-feeder anyway. Besides it was a cheap problem (Meaning it wouldn't be expensive for me when I messed things up), and the solutions would be judged by the birds which is impartial and objective.

I came up with several ideas and since I like to use the saw and a hammer and other tools, I chose to start with the solutions made of wood. My first solution the '*Tree Hut*' took a lot of effort to build, but was simple. It was only my arms that ached and not my brain.

As you can see this was strong enough to withstand the wind. It survived several hurricanes. I didn't need any attachment solution since it was built on solid ground. It was easy access to the food and the smaller birds loved it. So did the crows and magpies. And I forgot that the cats do have something called claws.



My second attempt was the *'House'*.

This one was shielded from the rain and snow, it would be fastened with nails on top of the other bird-feeder the *'Tree Hut'*, it could withstand the wind and the crows and magpies and cats.

However this one was so complicated and took forever to build so I never finished it .

(Eventually I used it as fire-wood..)



My third attempt was the '*Funkhouse*', inspired from the slimlined buildings in the 60's.

The '*Funkhouse*' could withstand the wind, it could hang from a branch from a hook on the back, it shielded brilliantly from the snow and rain, and not a cat could reach this one because it was hanging from a hook in the back -loose in the air. The magpies and crows gave it up because it was dangling too much. Sadly the smaller birds did too. Only the bravest of them dared to climb in and get the food, so I had to give this one up.





My fourth attempt was the '*Cradle*'. Inspired from the baby Jesus. (It was Christmas you see.)

It may not look like it, but this one was the hardest and worst solution for me to build. It gave me the most headaches. Everything went wrong. I wanted to throw the hammer out the window and it completely stressed me out. Normally I am pretty good at building and fixing things, but this time, let just say I wasn't. The end of the nails came out at the other end, I broke a piece of wood in two, I cut almost every single piece wrong and when I thought it was finished I raised it up. It sighed like the leaning tower in Pica.

I didn't finish this one either.

I later build a version of this were the birds got confused. They couldn't figure out what it was and I found a bird sleeping in it.

Challenge – Your challenge this week is to find out what type of creative thinker you are. What type of creativity do you enjoy? Not an easy task, I know. Are you a visionary that can picture things in your head? Or are you a more hands-on practical problem-solver. Perhaps you prefer the more strategic approach.

Week 10- Combination

Each on their own the different creative methods are useful. It is when you combine them it gets interesting and this week it is all about that.

First a sum up of the previous weeks:

Week 1 - (The) Observation

This week it is all about observing. Take a day in your shop where you observe your daily routines. Is your routine rigid or loose? Do you take a pause from the routines at some point? How is your energy through the day? How do you end the day?

Week 2 - Observe Consequence

In last week the Observation was more of a personal and close up involvement. This week it is more of a quiet from a distance observation. This one is about changing one, minor thing. Then you step back and observe the consequence of it. Simple, yet interesting.

Week 3 – Practical Problem Solving

When it comes to creative thinking, this one might be the one that first springs to mind. This is a more typical approach and it is often used and referred to when people talk about creative problem-solving. Here it is the emphasis on solving mostly *practical* problems in a creative way.

Week 4 – Re-arrange

This week it is all about re-arranging your shop. And I say it just like that as if it is no bother. Ok, so what if I say it is about taking a closer look at the arrangement in your shop and making a plan of how to do it better.

Week 5 –System Organizing

This week it is about how you organize the work. First take a look at what system you have in place already. Look at these points: What work needs to be done? What is directly related to the business and what is not? Who is in charge of what? This is not about setting up a detail plan. See what categories and group you can put the work in.

Week 6- Business Strategy

Business strategy means making a conscious choice and making a plan in which direction to steer your business. The strategy part is the why behind it. You may think of strategy as a trying to come up with a clever move to what to do with the business. And the challenge is to figuring out what the clever bit is.

Strategy is the what to do next.

Strategy can might as well be connected to *your* why, which is the frustrating part. Having an innovative strategy doesn't always mean to be loud. An innovative strategy can might as well be done without all the big leaps and heavy marketing campaigns.

Week 7-Strategic Innovation

Strategic innovation means an innovation that is aligned with your business strategy and it is meant to give you a competitive edge above your competitors.

Or it is tactic where you form a strategy in alignment with the innovation.

Week – 8 Wild Ideas

Ideally a wild idea is not connected to solving a specific problem. Wild ideas don't have to be connected to your business even.

Week 9 – Personal

This week was about trying out rehearsals in your personal life to getting used to using creative thinking and doing.

#10 - Combination of Creative Methods ex.



Examples of combinations

6 & 8
Business Strategy
& Wild Idea

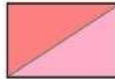
4 & 5
Re-arrange
& System Organizing

8&9
Wild Ideas
& Personal

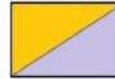
Combination A)



Combination B)



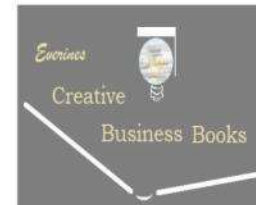
Combination C)



Here you adjust your business to fit your personal, creative style and wishes. The business reflects the creative version of you.

You may think of this as the Richard Branson version. You get wild ideas and put them into action by making them not only a part of your strategy, but THE strategy.

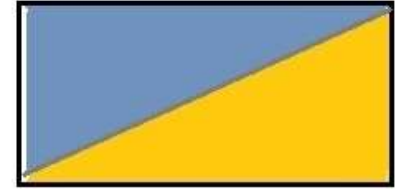
This is where you make the perfect system to fit your type of business and what you do and re-arrange the shop accordingly.



Combinations of Creative Methods Examples

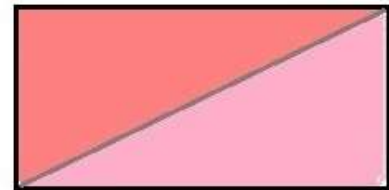
Combination A) 6&8 Business Strategy and Wild Ideas

You may think of this as the Richard Branson version. You get wild ideas and put them into action by making them not only a part of your strategy, but THE strategy.



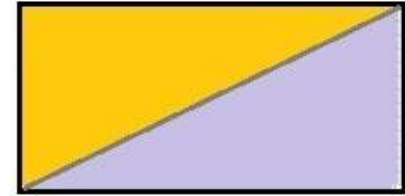
Combination B) Re-arrange & System Organizing

This is where you make the perfect system to fit your type of business and what you do and re-arrange the shop accordingly.



Combination C) Wild Ideas & Personal

Here you adjust your business to fit your personal, creative style and wishes. The business reflects the creative version of you.



Challenge – Take a look at your business and see if you can find the most suited combination. Now play with the combinations and see if you can find a three version combinations that suits you.

Do you automatically number them? See if it makes a difference if you put them in another order. What happens if you put a combination of three methods and instead melded them into one? Try to do that with a three combination version and see what you think of it and what you prefer.

A Word at the End

If you read all this way and done the challenges I am mighty impressed. Or if you tried to keep up, but gave it up after a few weeks, I am still impressed. This book/creative course it is difficult and challenging to put it mildly. Each different creative method brings their challenges with them. This isn't easy and you have to adjust along the way. You can also find that you had to jump from one creative method to another in the middle of a project. Use it however as you see fit. Use it how you see fit and remember, you are good enough and it will feel awkward to begin with.

This book can also be used as an encyclopaedia where you take it out when you need to and do the challenges in your own good time, on your own terms. And good luck.

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