

Extreme Thinking: Unlocking Creativity



...a better way to manage

the
happy
manager

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HOW TO BE A BETTER MANAGER

Extreme Thinking: Unlocking Creativity

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How to be a Better Manager...

Extreme Thinking: Unlocking Creativity is one of a series of practical, thought-provoking guides, designed to help you deal with a wide range of management ideas, activities and situations. Whether you are a new manager, or one who wants to hone or develop existing skills, we're sure you'll find something valuable in any of these guides.

This series of e-guides is published by Apex Leadership Ltd. The guides have been developed by a team of professional managers, consultants and educators. The full range of titles is available from [Apex Leadership Ltd](#), or from [the Happy Manager.com](#). Use these guides to benefit from our wealth of management expertise. Let us help you find: **a better way to manage...**"

Phil Higson & Anthony Sturgess
Directors, Apex Leadership Ltd

Using the guides

Each guide contains information, insight and inspiration on essential management topics. The best way to use the guides is to read through each section in turn, ensuring you pause for reflection wherever you see the "Consider..." points. Be sure to answer any questions posed, wherever they appear - they are there for a reason!

Consider ...

Tools ...

After you've worked through the guide, work through the tools. These have been designed to help you use and develop the advice given in the guide.

- Click on the tool buttons where they appear for an in-text hyperlink to the actual tool.
- At the end of each tool you can simply click on the "return" link to get back to your place in the guide.

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Introduction

This aim of this guide is start you thinking about thinking - using the power of ideas to help shape the future where you work. It will help you to:

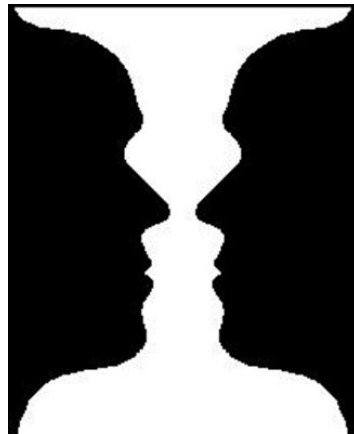
- Apply thinking techniques for creativity.
- Explore different perspectives to aid creative solutions.
- Investigate "Tipping Point" principles – small changes which have big impacts.
- Apply principles to test the potential of new ideas.

Creative extreme thinking

Some interpretations of extreme thinking relate it to polarised thinking. For example, thinking purely in terms of black or white, up or down, extremely good or extremely bad.

This guide is about extreme thinking from a different perspective. It's about thinking creatively, with an open mind. How is it possible to bring such diverse interpretations together?

Start by looking at the image below.



If you look at it in purely black and white terms, what do you see? Now look again, with an enquiring mind. It's possible to see something completely different, something less obvious – either a candlestick or two faces, depending on what you saw the first time!

So, with just a little bit of creative thinking, things are not so black and white after all. If this creative approach to extreme thinking works on such a small scale, imagine the impact it could have on your work.

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Get ready, mind-set, goal!

Consider

Fortune favours the prepared mind.

There are several translations of this famous quote by Louis Pasteur but whatever the language, the message remains the same.

Getting your mind ready to think will pay dividends.

There are several things to consider in making your preparations to think, especially if you want to do some thinking on the edge. It might be useful to use a three step approach to creative extreme thinking:

1. **Get ready:** prepare yourself physically.
2. **Mind-set:** prepare mind to think creatively.
3. **Goal:** think about what it is you're trying to achieve, then achieve it!



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Think differently

Creative extreme thinking might not be about scale, sometimes it's just about seeing things differently.

Life is a stage

For example, how do you see customer service? Most people would see it as a process, some as a philosophy, some may even see it as a calling. How many would see it as a show? Thinking about service as a show, and your role in it as a performance, can put a whole new light on how you manage it.

Indeed, some service providers refer to elements of their activities in theatrical terms. This emphasises the perception that a service can be seen as a performance, involving a stage, actors, scripts, a back stage area and, of course, an audience. For example:

- The physical environment becomes a stage.
- Service employees are actors.
- The service delivery process becomes the script.
- Customers are the audience.
- Back office support is what happens back stage.

Innovation in Experiential Services – An Empirical View
Chris Voss and Leonieke Zomerdijk, June 2007

The customer comes second.....

Customers first is finally becoming a recognised priority for organisations. This sentiment is increasingly finding its way into mission statements and strategies. Some organisations are achieving this via what may seem a counter-intuitive approach: saying the customer comes second. For example, Hal Rosenbluth built up a small, family-run travel company to become one of the largest in the United States. In his provocative book "Customers Come Second", he outlined his radical approach to management: putting employees first:

**"Profits are a natural extension of happiness in the workplace."
"If we put our people first, they'll put our clients first."**

The same philosophy underpins the way Southwest Airlines operates, as described in the book "Nuts! There are numerous similarities between these two very successful companies, not least of which is relative profitability. Their success is built on reaping the rewards of outstanding customer service, paradoxically by putting the customer second.

Both organisations recruit people, with the right mind-sets and personality, and train them to a high level. This gives both companies a highly motivated, skilled, dedicated workforce. Their employers put their staff first, who in turn end up putting their customers first. Thinking differently means everyone wins.

Consider




"If I had asked customers what they wanted they would have said a faster horse."
(Henry Ford)

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Tool 1: Get ready, mind-set, goal!

Make notes in each section of this tool to get you ready for creative extreme thinking.

		
<p>Think about thinking time – when is best for you? Do you think better early in the morning or later in the day? Whichever works best for you, how can you schedule reflection time into your work routine?</p>	<p>Extreme thinking requires the right frame of mind or mind-set. Remember the black and white comparison test then note how you might consciously open your mind to new ideas or ways of doing things.</p>	<p>Remember your goals, both personal and organisational – list the things you are specifically trying to achieve.</p>
<p>Exercise, regular breaks, relaxation techniques and the right food DO make a difference. What can you do?</p>	<p>List the creative thinking techniques you might be able to practice.</p>	<p>The goal of extreme thinking is to make improvements. What opportunities are there? What problems are proving difficult?</p>
<p>Don't neglect your physical environment - find the right place to think, arrange your workspace to facilitate creative thinking, and in particular...de-clutter! What can you do?</p>	<p>Reflect on the new and the old, or do some clean-sheet thinking.</p>	<p>How can you add value to your organisation, its people, customers and stakeholders?</p>

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Join the conversation: bookmark the Happy Manager blog. (www.the-happy-manager/blog) Leave any comments, suggestions or examples of your own experiences for the benefit of other readers.

Titles available:

How to be a Happy Manager
Have a Good Workday
How to Build a Happy Workplace
Workstyle, Lifestyle

Build a Better Team
Team Building Exercises
Team Health Check
The Problems with Teams
Why is Teamwork Important?

Leadership Essentials
Defining Leadership
Leading with Style and Focus
Leading Insights

Transformational Change
Sustaining Change
Making Change Personal

It's All About Performance
15 Performance Management Tips
Managing Performance and Potential
Performance Management Skills
Performance Management Toolkit
Conducting a Performance Review
Manage Your Own Performance
Motivating Performance

Managing for Strength to Strength
Managers Make the Difference
Re-defining Middle Management
Do More with Less
Managing Time and Priority
Extreme Thinking: Unlocking Creativity
SMART Goals, SHARP Goals
Making Better Decisions
What's the Problem?

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