

Twenty Ideas for Increasing Your Creativity

1. **Reversal.** Think about how to make your situation worse, and then do the opposite. How can you make the product more expensive, what would make delivery times less reliable, and what's the reverse of that? Think about doing the opposite of what you'd planned – maybe making the factory smaller instead of bigger, or selling to fewer countries rather than more. Are there any ideas to be gained?
2. **Dictionary linking.** Pick a word at random from a dictionary, and then think about how this word could be used in a possible solution to the problem. Applying a rocket or water to your quality manual might be the sideways jolt you need, to give you a new idea.
3. **Use adjectives from another noun.** For example, using cat on ships: cuddly ships, dead mouse ships, ships that stay out at night, or ship flaps. Who knows, that might be how canal locks were invented!
4. **Look back.** Visualize the problem already solved, and then think about what you did to get there. Imagine yourself saying, "It was easy – all I did was..."
5. **What if?** Follow some possible sequences of events, based on different starting points. What if the people were different? What if I changed the product, timing, method, or method of promotion? What might happen? List the main features, and then think about changing each one in turn.
6. **Sleep on it.** Just before you go to sleep, consciously and formally ask your subconscious for an answer to the question – to be given in its own time.
7. **Matrix.** Ensure that all combinations have been covered by drawing out a matrix combining the variables; for example, all products sold to all customers or all markets with all methods of promotion.
8. **Other people: one to one.** Explain the problem to someone else and see what they come up with. If doing this isn't enough to come up with new solutions, go through each of your ideas and list the pros and cons. Describe what the ideal solution would be like.
9. **Question the problem.** Do you really need to solve it? Do you really want to solve it? Is there a different problem you could solve, or a way to live with it?
10. **Sit with your mind absolutely blank.** You are not allowed to think about the problem at all. It works like a kind of meditation, where you take the pressure off and then the idea just pops into your mind.

- 11. Keep going after the first solution, however good it may seem.** What is the second best solution? This forces you not to take the obvious or first choice. And then ask, how can the second best solution be improved to make it the best? You could even write down 20 solutions, however ridiculous, and then review them for actual good ideas.
- 12. What are the rules, system, or convention?** What if you don't follow them? For example: Always make sure your product is brilliant before you launch it. This was a rule until recently, and now people are launching beta products and following what the market wants.
- 13. Consult a fool.** They could give you a new angle on the situation. The "fool" could be an untrained person or perhaps a child.
- 14. Think of some silly, fun solutions.** Fun opens up the creative section of the brain. Do a brainstorm where only silly solutions are allowed.
- 15. Become more creative by changing yourself as a person.** Visualize yourself as creative, and then say to yourself every day, "I am a creative person. I am always coming up with new ideas." Keep saying it until it becomes true. I know this sounds odd but try it – it really does work. You just have to give your brain permission to release the ideas.
- 16. What if the problem was a good thing?** Where would that lead? For example, what if it was good to be slow or heavy?
- 17. Chunk up or down.** Orange juice goes up to drink, down to beer, which goes up to alcohol, which could come down to vodka, which goes up to made in Russia, down to fur coats, and so on.
- 18. Aim much higher than normal.** For example, to sell 100 times as much, or charge 10 times as much, or employ 100,000 people. Now, how could you do this?
- 19. If you had an army of 1,000 people to help you, how would you do it?** This is a way to put aside the barrier to not enough time and not enough people. You might even come up with an idea that could then be scaled down to be workable.
- 20. State the problem.** Start with "how to..." (e.g., "how to sell more" and not "we're not selling as much"). Next, restate the problem without using the same words, such as "how to get more customers to want our product." Then restate it again, "to have two of our products in every house." How could this be made to happen? Where in the house would it be?