

2. *Back off and start afresh.* Often we stay so close to a problem for so long that we can't see new solutions or new approaches.

An engineer friend was retained a few weeks ago to design a distinctly new aluminum structure; in fact, nothing even resembling it had even been developed, or designed, before. I saw him just a few days ago, and I asked him how his new building was coming along.

"Not too well," he replied. "I guess I haven't spent enough time with my garden this summer. When I live with tough design problems for a long stretch, I've got to get away and let some new ideas soak in.

"You'd be surprised," he continued, "to know how many engineering ideas come to me when I'm just sitting beside a tree holding a water hose on the grass."

President Eisenhower once was asked at a news conference why he took so many weekend vacations. His answer is good advice for everybody who wants to maximize his creative ability. Mr. Eisenhower said, "I do not believe that any individual, whether he is running General Motors or the United States of America, can do the best job just by sitting at a desk and putting his face in a bunch of papers. Actually, the president ought to be trying to keep his mind free of inconsequential details and doing his own thinking on the basic principles and factors . . . so that he can make clear and better judgments."

A former business associate of mine takes a seventy-two-hour out-of-town vacation with his wife once each month. He found this backing off and starting afresh increased his mental efficiency, thereby making him more valuable to his clients.

When you hit a snag, don't throw up the whole project.