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# Lateral Thinking

Wendell Chun

College of Engineering and Applied  
Science



College of Engineering  
and Applied Science

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO  
DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

# Lateral Thinking (LT)

- In normal thinking, each step that we take is firmly based on the preceding step (vertical thinking). When we arrive at a solution, the validity of that solution is proved by the validity of every preceding step.
- Lateral thinking gets us out of the normal way and we create something new.
- **Methods for lateral thinking:**
  - Provocation :: Random Word :: Pressure – 90 ideas in 10 minutes :: Steal from a previous idea on the list



# Basics Behind Lateral Thinking

- We are hardwired to be UN-creative.
- We need formal tools for breaking out of patterned thinking.
- Everyone can learn how to be more creative.
- Lateral Thinking gives you the power to create ideas on demand.



# Suggest Lateral Thinking if you hear ...

any of these

seven common comments

*(The cartoons in this presentation are used  
with Permission from the artist, Bob Thaves.)*



# Suggest Lateral Thinking if you hear ...

1. Management shoots down all of our ideas.



# Because Lateral Thinking will

- Give managers the tools to encourage and reward the creative EFFORT that must become a habit before you can get consistently innovative results.
- Give employees the tools to assess and improve ideas before submitting them.



# Suggest Lateral Thinking if you hear ...

## 2. Creative people are a nuisance. They're always getting out of line.



# Because Lateral Thinking will

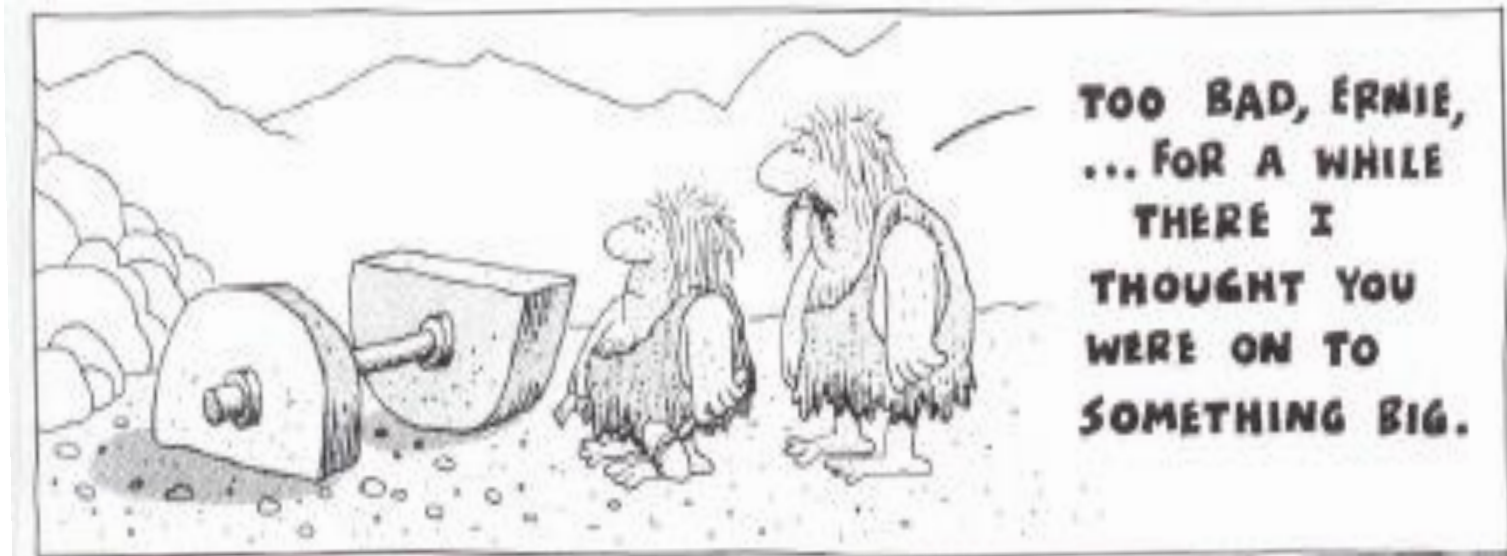
- Teach managers how to perceive creative intrusions as a valuable tool for checking blind spots and biases. Creative ideas are often jarring.
- Give collaborative employees the tools to generate creative ideas on demand. You do not have to rely on a flock of born rebels to “buck the system.”





# Suggest Lateral Thinking if you hear ...

3. We don't have time to go through all that trial and error.



# Because Lateral Thinking will

- Teach managers to be alert for new opportunities at every stage as ideas are explored.
- Give employees tools that speed up the innovation process.



# Suggest Lateral Thinking if you hear ...

4. Creative people are so off-the-wall. Their ideas are never feasible.



# Because Lateral Thinking will

- Give everyone the tools of provocation and movement so they know how to get value from initially unworkable ideas.
- Teach everyone how to harvest, tailor, and shape ideas to make them more practical.



# Suggest Lateral Thinking if you hear ...

5. This company doesn't see mistakes as progress. We quit too soon.



# Because Lateral Thinking will

- Give everyone tools to assess and minimize risk.
- Teach everyone how to perceive failures as necessary steps in the creative process.
- Enable everyone to learn from their mistakes.



# Suggest Lateral Thinking if you hear ...

6. We don't know what to be creative about.



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# Because Lateral Thinking will

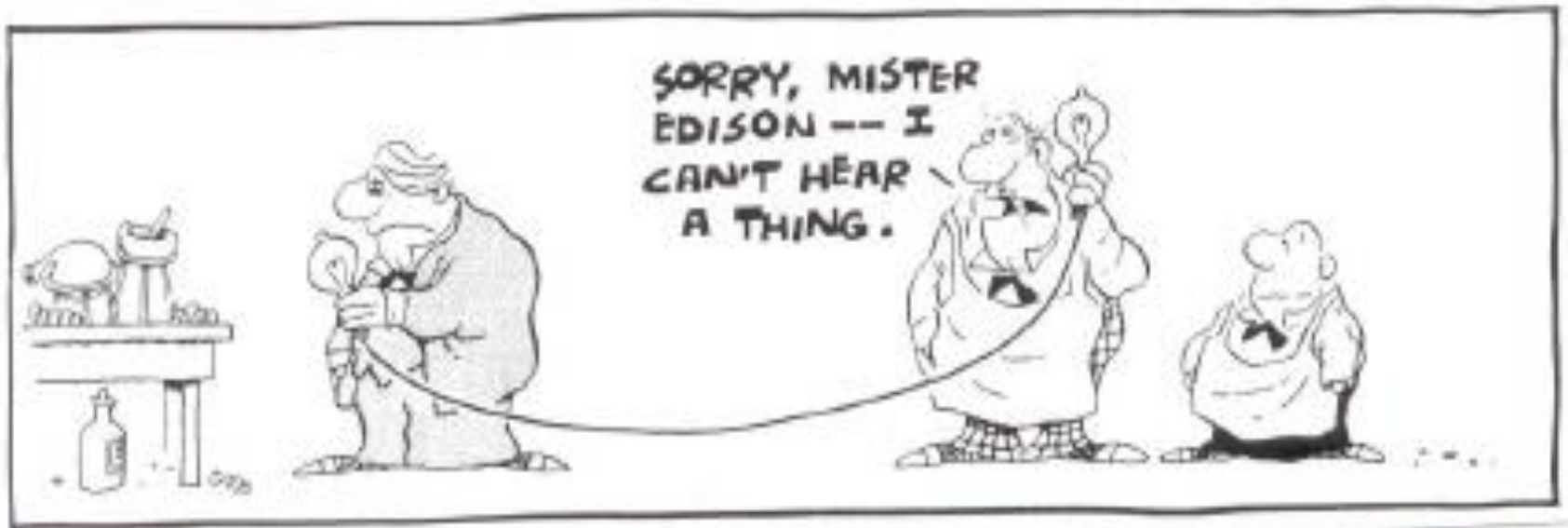
- Teach all how to develop and work on a Creative Hit List.





# Suggest Lateral Thinking if you hear ...

7. We don't need new ideas. We're already aligned about what we're doing/where we're going/how to get there.



# Because Lateral Thinking will

- Teach everyone the absolute necessity of applying the creative process continuously to every strategy, process, assumption, product, and practice, in our rapidly changing world.



# Lateral Thinking

Many problems require a  
different perspective to solve  
successfully

Edward de Bono



# Lateral Thinking

Four critical factors associated with lateral thinking:

1. Recognize dominant ideas that polarize the perception of a problem
2. Search for different ways of looking at things
3. Relaxation of rigid control of thinking
4. Use of chance to encourage other ideas



# Lateral Thinking: Avoidance

Keep an idea from dominating thinking as it always has in the past by asking avoiding questions.

- Ask “Is there another way of looking at this?”
- Ask “Why?”
- Focus on an aspect of the problem other than the “logical” one.
- List all possible alternatives to every aspect of the analysis.
- Break apart aspects (concepts) of the problem, or combine them to create even more concepts.



# LT Q1: The Subway Problem

- A large city in the United States had a problem with thefts of light bulbs from its subway system.
- Thieves would unscrew the light bulbs, leading to cost and security issues.
- The engineer who was given this challenge could not alter the location of the light bulbs, and he had very little budget to work with, but he came up with a very lateral solution. What was it?

(illustrates the need for innovation)



# LT Q2: Vandal Scandal

- The authorities in Athens were very concerned that tourists sometimes hacked to piece parts from the ancient columns of the Parthenon building.
- The practice was illegal, but some people were determined to take away souvenirs.
- How did the authorities stop this practice?

(lateral thinking at its best)



# LT Q3: Shoe Shop Shuffle

- In a small town, there are four shoe shops of about the same size, and each carries a similar line of shoes.
- Yet one shop loses three times as many shoes to theft. As each of the other shops.
- Why and how did they fix the problem?

(more innovation)





# LT Q4: The School Inspection

- A schoolteacher knew that the school superintendent would visit the next day.
- The superintendent would ask questions such as spellings or mental arithmetic of the class, and the teacher would choose a pupil to answer.
- The teacher wanted to give the best impression of the school.
- What instructions did she give the children, in order to create the best impression and maximize the chances that the right answer was given to each question?



# LT Q5: Brush Fires

- The Los Altos Hills County Fire district commissioners in California had a severe problem with a brushwood fires on the slopes of the hills around the town.
- If they cleared away the brushwood with tractors, they could cause sparks which would start fires.
- What did they do?

(keeping it real)



# LT Q6: The Coconut Millionaire

- A man buys coconut at \$5 a dozen and sells them a \$3 a dozen.
- Because of this, he becomes a millionaire. How?

(challenge your assumptions)



# LT Q7: Wrong Number

- The marketing department of a major bank prepared a direct mail campaign to launch a new product.
- They printed over 2 million brochures, but were horrified to find a mistake in the brochure - it had a wrong digit in the telephone number.
- Callers would get a deadline, instead of the call centre.
- What should they do first – fire the marketing manager, or reprint the brochures?

(don't forget to ask other questions – what, why, when, how, where, who)



# LT Q8: The Stockbroker

- A young stockbroker was starting his own practice.
- He had no clients.
- How did he convinced a small number of wealthy people that he could accurately predict stock price movements ?

(break rules, do the unusual)



# LT Q9: The Unusual

- What can you dry your hair with, cut the grass with and lift a car with?
- (sometimes solutions are obvious, don't make it harder than it actually is)



# LT Q10: Price Tag

- Many shops have prices set at just under a round figure such as \$9.99 instead of \$10 or \$99.95 instead of \$100.
- It is often assumed that this is done to make the prices appear lower to the customer.
- But this is not the reason, the practice started.
- What was the origin original reason for this pricing method?

(small changes can sometimes have a big impact)



# LT Q11: Interview Question

- This question has been used as an aptitude test at interviews.
- You are driving in your sports car on a cold wet evening.
- You pass a bus stop where you see three people waiting for the bus.
- One is your best friend from school days, who you have not seen for 20 years. One is the man or woman of your dreams - the person you always wanted to meet. The third is a sick old lady, who needs to be taken to the hospital.
- Knowing that there is room for only one passenger in your car, what would you do?





# LT Q12: Material Gains

- During the Californian gold rush, a young entrepreneur went to California with the idea of selling tents to the miners.
- He thought there would be a good market for tents from thousands of people who flocked to dig for gold.
- Unfortunately, the weather was so mild that the miners slept in the open air, and there was little demand for his tents.
- What did he do?

(welcome failure, it's not always bad!)



# LT Q13: Late Train

- A businessman called the train station to find the time of his train.
- When he reached the station, he was surprised to learn that he was half an hour early.
- What time was his train?

22.10 but heard 20 to 10



# LT Q14: EasyJet

- EasyJet is the leading low-cost air carrier in Europe.
- It has been responsible for many innovations in low-cost air travel.
- There are no free drinks on EasyJet flight. If you want a drink, you have to buy it.
- According to a recent magazine article, there are two major business benefit from this policy. One is the income generated. What do you think is the second?

(creativity)

