



Seeing tomorrow's ideas...Today

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Focus on Innovation

Focus on Innovation is a monthly electronic newsletter designed to provoke thoughts and ideas on how to bring innovation to life within the organizations in which we work.

One way to increase the level of innovation within an organization is to develop members' skills in generating alternatives to those pressing problems that need to be solved. This month's newsletter provides one of the many quick and easy creativity techniques for generating alternatives as part of the problem solving process.

Creativity Technique: Circle of Opportunity

Circle of opportunity is a process that involves randomly selecting problem attributes and combining them to create a topic for a brainstorming session. The technique originated from Michael Michalko, author of *Thinkertoys: A Handbook of Business Creativity for the 1990's* (Ten Speed Press, 1991). The process can be time-consuming yet very rewarding in terms of the ideas generated. Circle of opportunity is somewhat similar to attribute-listing and attribute associations processes and contains ingredients of some of the forcing techniques.

How the process works:

1. Define the problem - for example, developing a new product or refining a service offering.
2. Draw a circle and number it like a clock from 1 to 12.
3. Select any 12 attributes of the problem (e.g., of the product or service) and list these in positions 1 to 12 on the "Clock face." Attributes include things like - quality, design, colour, size, etc.
4. Throw a die or dice to determine the number of the first attribute to work on.
5. Individually or in a group, brainstorm, free associate and/or mindmap whatever thoughts about that attribute occur to you.
6. Continue rolling the dice until you have used all twelve numbers and worked on all of the attributes.
7. Consider the attributes, both separately, and combined, to find an association between the two attributes. Search for a link between your association and your problem.

What's the Bottom line

There are many ways to find alternatives to pressing problems. Circle of opportunity is a great technique when you faced with the challenge of developing a new product or service or when a new approach to something is needed.

Adapted from: James, M. Higgins's book, *101 Creative Problem Solving Techniques: The Handbook for New Ideas for Business*, New Management Publishing Company Inc., 1994.



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If you would like more information about the ideas and topics listed in this issue, contact Judy Laws, Ph.D. at jlaws@foursightconsulting.com.

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