

## **Creative Thinking 1 – Reversal Thinking and Lateral Thinking**

### **Reversal Thinking – Background**

Edward de Bono, an expert on Creative Thinking, believes that using Reversal Thinking (or Problem Reversal as it's sometimes called) is one of the best ways to improve a product, service or situation that could be better.

He thinks that if you want to know what could be improved, you first have to make an exaggerated list of all of the features that could possibly go wrong.

Problem reversal could be used to improve things that already exist such as tools, equipment, services and strategies. Learners can be encouraged to think about changes to products such as mobile phones, milk cartons, cinemas, toys and ready meals and services such as banks accounts, car hire, dry cleaning, childcare, etc.

### **Reversal Thinking - The Worst Hotel in the World**

- Learners are introduced to Reversal Thinking through the scenario of the Worst Hotel in the World.
- First of all they read a posting from a website where holiday-makers record their experiences. This holiday-maker has not had a good experience: aggressive staff, dirty bed linen and stifling hot conditions. The hotel is a candidate for the Worst Hotel in the World Award.
- Learners are then asked to think about what makes a hotel the worst in the world and record their thoughts under five categories – location, food, rooms, leisure and staff. They can compare their lists with tutor lists online.
- They then work through an identical exercise about the Best Hotel in the World, looking at the same categories. The contrast between worst and best should hopefully draw out some good ideas for making a world class hotel. Again tutor answers are provided for comparison.

### **Supporting Learners**

These exercises are probably best done individually. However, if you have a group of students working on this chunk at the same time, they could compare answers with each other.

Reversal thinking is one of the more accessible techniques and learners usually don't have trouble understanding what is required. The scenario of a hotel is within the experience of most people and learners can usually come up with a few ideas. Some may need a bit of prompting to expand on their list.

### **Reversal Thinking – additional exercises**

In the chunk called Creative Exercises, there are six exercises for Reversal Thinking, one for each of the creative strands:

**Pictures**  
**Words**  
**Logic**  
**People**  
**Music**  
**Movement**

Learners could choose an exercise from the list that inspires them and they could do more than one if time allows.

In addition to this, they could apply reversal thinking as follows:

**Work** – to any situation, process or piece of equipment that could be improved.

**Study** – any area of study. Either improvements to their own study skills (e.g. note-taking) or improvements to aspect of the subjects they are studying – business workflow, scientific process, vehicle repair, etc.

**Home and Leisure** – improvements to hobbies, relationships, budgeting, etc.

## **Websites**

### **Mindtools**

[http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCT\\_01.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCT_01.htm)

### **Charles' Cave Creativity Web**

<http://members.optusnet.com.au/~charles57/Creative/Techniques/reversal.htm>

### **Creativity and Innovation in Science and Technology**

<http://www.mycoted.com/creativity/techniques/prob-reverse.php>

## **Lateral Thinking – Background**

Lateral thinking, in essence, means looking at a problem from a different angle. The term was coined by Edward de Bono in 1967 and is sometimes also described as “thinking outside the box”.

In practice this can mean:

- turning a situation to your advantage
- finding new uses for familiar objects
- finding substitutes when objects aren't available
- altering objects so that they can perform new functions
- finding new ways to do things

## **Lateral thinking – online material**

- Learners are first asked to consider pets and how they are likely to view the world differently to their owners, e.g. at holiday times or on Guy Fawkes' Night.
- There is then a letter from a cat owner to a vet and the vet's reply. The cat is living in the roof space and outwitting the owner who is trying to catch him. This highlights the concept of lateral thinking: a space that is dark and unattractive to humans is an ideal home to a cat
- Aspect of lateral thinking are outlined (as above) and learners then look at how pets, babies, people with disabilities and refugees all use lateral thinking to their advantage.
- Learners are then asked to consider how they would cope with everyday activities if they lost the power of one of their arms. They enter their answers on screen and are then invited to look at the tutor's answers.
- The next task reverses the process. Learners start with 5 everyday objects and think of additional uses, e.g. a bottle of nail varnish or a plastic egg box.
- The final task is to think of as many uses as possible for empty audio cassette cases. 16 sample answers are provided.

## **Lateral thinking – additional exercises**

In the chunk called Creative Exercises, there are six exercises for Lateral Thinking, one for each of the creative strands:

**Pictures**

**Words**

**Logic**

**People**

**Music**

**Movement**

Learners could choose an exercise from the list that inspires them and they could do more than one if time allows.

In addition to this, they could apply lateral thinking as follows:

### **At home:**

To think of ways to:

--use space better

--use things for different purposes

--save money by buying fewer things

### **In relationships:**

To look for new solutions to repeating patterns of behaviour

**For hobbies and leisure**

To organise or improve equipment or methods.

**At work**

To improve working methods and equipment.

**In their studies**

To think of better ways to organise themselves.

**Websites - Lateral Thinking****BBC – h2g2 Website**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A250381>

**Edward de Bono – lateral thinking**

<http://www.edwdebono.com/debono/lateral.htm>

**Joey Green's Wacky Uses Site**

<http://wackyuses.com/>

**Charles Cave on Edward de Bono**

<http://members.optusnet.com.au/~charles57/Creative/Techniques/lateral.htm>

**Robert Alan's Creativity Site**

<http://www.cre8ng.com/welcome.shtml>