

INNOVATION BY CREATIVITY – Fifty-one tools on how to solve problems creatively

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INTRODUCTION

Believe you're not creative? Innovation by Creativity gives readers a concise guide to using fifty-one different tools designed to help you be more creative. Whether you're a manager, facilitator or someone who wants to be more creative then this is a book for your creative toolkit.

Set out in six logically structured and well defined chapters this book enables the reader to start to think creatively or become more creative than they thought they could be. In language that is clear and mostly free from technical jargon the reader is taken on a journey that is mapped out right from the start. The itemised contents page lets you see at a glance the wide range of tools the authors have included. Each chapter is structured to explain concisely the rationale of the creative process.

The authors feel that there is an increasing demand for creative solutions to the various types of problems throughout society, not just commercially, which led to the development of this book. They warn that creativity can be limited through the overloading of the definition of creativity with values, opinions and symbols. Bearing this in mind their uncomplicated yet carefully crafted definition of creativity is:

"...the ability to generate new and useful ideas and solutions for everyday problems and challenges."

From this premise they go on to state that everyone has the potential to be creative. They add that you can become more creative by:

1. Giving yourself permission to do things in a creative way: &
2. Conquer your personal barriers.

Personally I feel that the book assumes too much of a simplistic view in this area as the outcomes of both these points could require a considerable degree of behavioural change on the reader's behalf, something that for many could be particularly difficult. However, accepting their view that:

"Everyone can do it, everyone has got what it takes!"

then the wide ranging suggested 'Hints and Tips' on heightening and developing creativity form a very useful way forward.

I fully endorse the books action based approach as actions are the identifiable outcomes of thinking whereas thoughts without action will remain just thoughts.

It isn't until the end of the Introduction that the Authors tell you what they want to achieve with this book. Their intent is to provide the reader with a few tools in an accessible way, something, I feel that would have been more useful at the beginning.

The authors recognise the vital importance of communication, defined by them as:

"...simply the sending and receiving of message."

They do expand on this with the description of three aspects of a good mutual exchange of information: listening; body language; & giving everyone a chance. The description of each aspect incorporates examples and aids. It becomes evident at this stage that the role of facilitator is vital in the creativity group sessions, and because of that the authors provide a phased structure. As with previous chapters they break each phase into aspects and stages.

I found this part of the book to be really useful, yet on the other hand somewhat confusing. Useful because of the logical sequencing of the process of managing the session and the development of the 'Rules of Play'. Confusing because the preparation and session phases seemed to have merged which left me having to go back two or three times to distinguish where one phase stopped and the next one started. Without a 'Session' heading the chapter flow was disrupted.

The Frame for a Creative Process chapter sets out, again very logically, the three phases and ten stages for the process. Each stage is set out clearly and includes useful hints and tips and examples. Unfortunately the lack of phase heading between stages left me a little confused.

There is a really useful Tool Selector grid which is a great visual aid for seeing which tool (each defined in the next chapter) relates to which stage of the creative process (as per the previous chapter).

The main section of the book is the one covering the fifty-one tools. Each tool is related to one, or more stages of the creativity process. It identifies a suggested number of participants and sets out the key requisites. What sets this book aside from others is that each tool includes examples whereas others include assignments, Tips and Tricks.

CONCLUSION

This book is packed with some great tools for developing creative thinking either in groups or individually. The book's well laid out and logical structure makes it easy to navigate and use. The tool selector is particularly helpful as are the examples for each tools application. There are a couple of places where I would have preferred to have seen a little more stage connection but this doesn't detract from the overall presentation.

I've used a number of these tools over the past few weeks and I'd recommend this book as an 'essential' toolkit item.

Regards,

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