Blocks to Creativity

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Creativity course

- Definitions, theories, and myths
- Process & subconscious thinking
- Elements
- Blocks
- Individual
- Group
- Intellectual property
Why be concerned with blocks?

- So that they may be recognized and eliminated smoothing the way to creativity
Classification of blocks

One classification is the following:

• Perceptual
• Emotional
• Cultural
• Environmental
• Intellectual
Perceptual blocks

- They prevent problem recognition
  - Stereotyping, assumptions, and missing associations
An example

- Men approached by a female researcher, dripping blood after a supposed attack by a laboratory rat, were more likely to offer help if the woman was beautiful.

  - *Newsweek*, “Beyond the Bell Curve,” November 7, 1994
Another example

- Every inch of additional height accounts for roughly US$789 a year in extra pay, for attorneys
  - “The tyranny of tallness,” AJC, 11/2/03
Mistaken assumptions are perceptual problems

- You pass a person in the hallway, a person with which you would like to be friendlier
- You wait for the person to nod and say “hello,” but it doesn’t happen
- Assumption: This person is unwilling to be friendly toward me
Mistaken assumptions are perceptual problems

Other possibilities

• Some people don’t say “hello” unless there is mutual eye contact, and there wasn’t
• Some people don’t say “hello” unless they know the other person, and you are unknown
• Maybe they thought you were speaking to someone else
• And so on...
What is an assumption?

- Information that’s treated as if it were true without verifying that it is true.
- We make 1000’s of assumptions/day and can only verify a few.
- If you find that you are rejecting a creative idea because you believe that it won’t work, ask yourself “Does this rejection involve an assumption?”
- If the assumption is tested and found to be untrue, a new alternative solution becomes available.
Optical trickery is a perceptual problem

The lines aren’t bent!
Delimiting the problem is yet another perceptual problem.

Connect all the dots with four or fewer straight lines without lifting the pen.
Delimiting the problem is yet another perceptual problem

Think outside the box!
Think outside the box!

Delimiting the problem

- Jet Blue…all of its 550 reservation agents work from their homes…saving 20% per flight booking
- David Needleman (founder), is using ‘out-of-the-box thinking’ says Stuart Laskin, aviation consultant
- “Moving into the future,” Newsweek, April 29, 2002
The only time that you can’t afford to fail is the last time that you try.

Charles Kettering
Who was Charles Kettering?

He was a hands-on inventor who, even today, continues to impact all aspects of our society.

He was co-founder of the Delco-Products Division of GM.

Holder of 140 patents and 30 honorary PhD’s.

Electric auto ignition system
Spark plug
Automatic transmission
Safety glass
Freon as a refrigerant
Leaded gasoline
Four-wheel brakes
Emotional blocks

- Fear of failure
- Inability to incubate
- Judging rather than generating
- Excessive zeal
- And, many others
Fear of failure

- Only one right answer
- There are many right answers
- What is the worst that can happen?
The creative process

- Preparation
- Incubation
  - Subconscious thinking
- Illumination
- Verification
Inability to incubate

- It’s OK to put off assignments
- Editing what I have just written is useless
When do creative ideas emerge?
When do creative ideas emerge?

- 10. While performing manual labor
- 9. While listening to a sermon
- 8. Middle of the night (awakening)
- 7. While exercising
- 6. During leisure reading
When do creative ideas emerge?

- 5. During a boring meeting
- 4. While falling asleep or waking up
- 3. While commuting to work
- 2. While showering or shaving
When do creative ideas emerge?

1. While sitting on the toilet!
Judging rather than generating

- Judging rather than generating
  - “That won’t work”
  - “We tried that before”
  - Generate now, evaluate later
  - Effect of judgment
  - Build on ideas of others
“The Stat,” BW, 3/1/04

- 30% of adults say that the cell phone is the invention that they hate the most, but can’t live without
- 25% say the alarm clock
- 23% say the television
Excessive zeal

- Another example from consulting
  - Ron planned for weeks
  - Joe started modeling immediately
  - Somewhere between the two
Cultural blocks

- Fantasy is only for crazy people
- Playfulness is only for children
- Tradition is to be maintained
Fantasy is only for crazy people!

- Fantasy is a diversion, a waste of time
- Time for and time not for
- Example, dim lights and toggle heater switch
- Leading to a Frogmobile
- But, this could lead to a new way of locomotion
Frogmobile
Playfulness is not only for children!

- Saying “no” dozens of times/day
- Children lose their creativity
- Adults need to retrieve their playfulness
Tradition is to be maintained

- Many hide behind this cloak
  - “If it’s not broken, why fix it?”
- Opposites have the view
  - “Change for sake of change”
- Biggest problem is the first group
- Second group also causes problems
  - At the evaluation stage they lose objectivity, lack rationale
Environmental blocks

Some examples include

• Lack of cooperation and trust among colleagues
• Autocratic management
• Too many distractions
• Lack of support to bring ideas to implementation
Mary Wells Lawrence, a founder of the ad agency Wells, Rich Greene

“Most creative people are shy, oddly. They have to trust that you won’t laugh at them. It takes a lot of work. They have to really believe that you respect them, that you will love them for their ideas—that you will love them. They have to have the guts to do that, and they only have the guts if you trust them.”
Blocks to creativity from failure to understand

- Fear of saying “I don’t know”
- Many creative solutions are hidden by mistaken assumptions
Tell me why

- What genetic advantage do peaches gain from having fuzz?
% of people befuddled by their:

- Cell Phone
- Computer
- Home Security System
- VCR
- Stereo
- TV

Source: Online survey of 3000 adults, Jan. 10-12, 2002 by American Demographics/NFOWorld Group
Tell me why

- Many creative solutions are hidden by mistaken assumptions
Why this big concern with blocks?

- So that they may be recognized and eliminated smoothing the way to creativity
End