

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 44

Mindset can be a major obstacle to successfully tackling challenges...

Change Your Mindset...

Professor Douglas Hartree told me that, in his opinion, all the calculations that would ever be needed in Britain could be done on the three digital computers which were then (1951) being built. Lord Bowden



"Now, where did I put my underpants?"

Is your mindset an obstacle to finding solutions?

Imagine this. It's 6.00 a.m. in a small hotel. You're creeping down the back stairs to go for a run (OK that's probably fused your imagination circuits).

Half way down, you stumble over a young guy sitting on the stairs in his underpants. He looks at you but doesn't say anything. You look at him and think "he must have just got back from a run and is cooling down." You nod at each other in that polite British way and you head off for your run.

Yes. That was me last week in Lincoln. Never mind that he was in his underpants (making the assumption they were his) and was otherwise naked, I thought he'd just got back from a run.

Thirty minutes later I returned and "Underpants Man" was still there. We looked at each other. He didn't speak. I asked if anything

was wrong. "I'm locked out of my room," he replied sheepishly. At that point I feel a bit stupid that I hadn't thought this earlier.

I tried to contact hotel staff at the locked reception via intercom (no response) and by telephone, getting no answer. I suggested "Underpants Man" might sit in my room but he refused (was that a look of panic on his face?), so I gave him a towel and I went for a shower.

What has this bedroom farce to do with creative leadership?

Here we had a situation; man sitting on stairs in underpants and my mind was focussed on going for a run; so I arrived at an explanation that fitted with this running "mindset".

A mindset definition is: "A fixed mental attitude or disposition that predetermines a person's responses to and interpretations of situations."

Now mindsets are fine on one level. At the action stage of the flexible thinking process they can help us to achieve great things, however, fixed mindsets at the problem exploration or idea generation stage can be a major obstacle to flexible thinking or creative thought.

So

How can you overcome the problems associated with mindset? Here are a few suggestions:

- Seek other perspectives

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- Use different metaphors to explore situations
- Avoid approaching challenges with your own beliefs, values and assumptions to the fore
- When stuck on resolving a challenge with others, appreciate they may have a fixed mind set and help them to overcome this

These simple suggestions alone can help you resolve some powerful challenges. For a more structured approach, use flexible thinking techniques to help adopt a different mindset. You might use [Heroes](#) to gain a different perspective.

ACTION

Think about an issue you are embroiled in now, one which is proving hard to resolve. Use the suggestions in the last section and see what happens.

TO CLOSE

At 7.00 a.m I eventually got through to the receptionist on the telephone. "Has the man from Room Twelve spoken to you?" I asked. "Yes," he replied, "I'm here now." Pleased, I hung up.

Ten minutes later I walked downstairs and Underpants Man was still there. I went back to the telephone, got through to the owner and explained the problem.

My colleague who was downstairs heard the owner shouting at the receptionist, "Go and find this guy, he's wandering round the hotel half naked!"

Afterwards, I unpicked the story. Apparently the owner had heard the intercom buzzer and had answered my calls but I had not heard her. She had explained to the receptionist when he

arrived on duty that someone had been trying to get in touch. When I had phoned again at 7.00 a.m the receptionist apparently didn't hear my question about Room Twelve but was confirming he was at reception.

So why did he think I was trying to contact reception? Did he think I couldn't start my day unless I was reassured that someone was manning the desk? Was this another mindset issue, the rough draft for a bedroom farce or a new script for Fawlty Towers?

I never found out why the man was locked out in his underpants (it was a single room) and can't wait to get back to find out from the owner.

Have a well dressed week.

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