

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 69

By altering the concept, you can generate new ideas...

Find Concepts for Creativity...

"There is nothing worse than a sharp image of a fuzzy concept." Ansel Adams, photographer



"Eureka"

Have you some concepts you might challenge?

If you have ever travelled by train, you will likely empathise with my thoughts as I sat on a Metropolitan Line tube train in to London, one which appeared to be auditioning for a bit part in the World's Slowest Railway Journeys and watched as a fast train sped past mine. "I've paid only a few pence less than them," thinks Grumpy Old Man, "they leave from a more distant station and get in earlier...that's not fair!"

That led me to think about how Transport for London charge for Tube travel, which is based on the concepts of distance and the time of day you travel. I pondered over alternatives to these concepts, e.g. cost per "kilometre minute" but it was all a bit fuzzy and the slow motion of the train led me to doze.

Cut to a Flexible Thinking course I was running recently, a few weeks after my train journey. The

group used "Super Heroes", where people adopt the viewpoint of a Superhero to generate ideas, as a technique. Andrey, a participant, decided to use "Dash", the speedy little kid from "The Incredibles" as his Super Hero. His idea was that you could use an electronic chip to measure the speed Dash travelled between two points.

That was the "Eureka" moment for me and my fuzzy pricing concept. With 3 million London commuters using Oyster Cards (these use contactless chips, requiring you to wave the card over the reader to register the journey) surely you could charge based on the time between the commuter entering the station and leaving at the destination (concept: "speed of journey")? I'm sure there are a few wrinkles with this idea, (I have an image of hundreds of commuters loitering on the station because the train arrived too quickly!), but bear with me, we're generating ideas not evaluating them.

SO

Edward de Bono, in his book "Serious Creativity", describes three main types of concept. My examples are based on the train journey:

Purpose - What are we trying to do? E.g. charge for travelling; make a profit

Mechanism - How does it work? E.g. sell tickets to individuals

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Value – What value does this provide? E.g. distance travelled; travel during peak time

Thus, if we want to create ideas to raise revenue, the purpose, one technique is to consider the concept and perhaps change it, hence my concept of pricing by speed of journey.

If we challenge the mechanism concept “individual sales” and change it to “organisational sales”, we can ask, “What if we sold season tickets to organisations that non commuting employees could use to get around town?”

This led me to build on the idea and arrive at “What if we extended Oyster Card acceptance to London’s Black Cabs?” Now I can revert to the value concept behind this (flexibility) and look for other ideas; “Why just London cabs, why not all cabs that pick up near commuter stations?”

I hope you can sense that by moving back and forth between concepts and ideas, we can build fresh ideas.

ACTION

Identify some of the concepts in your work, whether Purpose, Mechanism or Value and play with them. Substitute other concepts and generate ideas.

TO CLOSE

Earlier this year, my wife resigned herself to getting glasses (concept: “maturity”) as sharp images became fuzzier (concept: “blind as a bat”) whilst of course maintaining her youthful looks (concept: “sycophancy”). On holiday recently, my son was playing about behind her back and my

wife reprimanded him. He looked puzzled at how she knew what he was up to. “I’ve got eyes in the back of my head,” she said. Quick as a flash, my daughter retorted, “How come you can see so well out of the back of your head when you see so badly out the front?” (Concept: “cheek”). I collapsed in laughter; (concept: “foolhardiness”).

Have a conceptually full week.

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