

WHAT MADE YOU SUCCESSFUL IN THE PAST WON'T IN THE FUTURE

# FOCUS

MAGAZINE OF  
THE AMERICAN  
CREATIVITY  
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# FOCUS

## MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN CREATIVITY ASSOCIATION

**FOCUS MAGAZINE is the official publication of the American Creativity Association, a 501(c)3 nonprofit association dedicated to disseminating the latest work in applied creativity and innovative problem solving.**

**Jamie O'Boyle, ACA President**

**Lynne Krause, Editor Emeritus**

**Margaret J. King, Ph.D., Copyeditor**

**Susan McAninley, Art Director**

### Contributing Writers:

**Chris Barlow**

**Peter de Jager**

**Bob Eckert**

**Trisha Garwood**

**Steve Grossman**

**Peter Lloyd**

**Jonathan Vehar**

**Photos: Fotolia unless otherwise identified**

**Send any inquiries, comments or questions concerning FOCUS c/o Jamie O'Boyle at: [cultureking@comcast.net](mailto:cultureking@comcast.net)**



**Goodwin College, Drexel University  
3001 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104  
e-mail: [info@amcreativityassoc.org](mailto:info@amcreativityassoc.org)  
website: <http://www.becreative.org>**

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E. Paul Torrance**

## Guest Editorial

### Change or Die

by Lynne Krause

George Land's 1973 landmark book, *Grow or Die*, caused quite a stir in the corporate world where radical cost-cutting for bottom-line reduction was the single-minded focus of corporate executives. Executives were unable — and, in some cases, unwilling — to access the type of thinking that allowed a far more creative and potentially risk-taking approach to the economic problems facing their companies. Land challenged them to grow their intellectual capital, not prune it, as a means to their survival. Many would refuse to heed this call and thereby suffered the consequences of reduced growth and market share, depleted human capital, and — in some cases — loss of their entire companies.



**2009 déjà vu.** Companies are once again faced with the challenge of their very survival. The difference this time: in order to grow in these recession-driven times, we must change the very nature of the way we do business, the way we go about solving problems, and the way we strategize the organization's future. The call this time is to Change or Die.

This is as true for the individual living in these times as for the corporate executive. The corporate world and the consumer world have collided; they are totally interdependent. The yin-yang of Planet Earth has finally touched every one of us. So the battle cry of Change or Die is meant for each of us regardless of the systems (economic, social, educational, political, environmental, technological, or spiritual) in which we operate.

In order to change we need to think differently. We need to learn to value our differences in thinking, learn from them, and treat each idea differently than our own — as a gift to be appreciated, not condemned. It was Einstein who pointed out that “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” In creative thinking we like to avow that there is more than one right answer. When a course is chosen that takes us to a solution different than the one we are comfortable with, we are embarking on a course of change. Our survival both as companies and people requires us to adopt thinking styles in which we may not feel comfortable — or even competent. That's what change is about. We learn to be comfortable with change by trying different things. We develop successes through practice, continually working through failed attempts.

Ned Herrmann, writing about change, summed it up best: “Ultimately, we humans must accept change as not only inevitable but also as a much needed ingredient in the survival of the species. Without change, we risk becoming endangered. History teaches us that the final verdict is change or face extinction.” So we have just two choices: embrace change as an opportunity to take control of your destiny or be dragged into change because there are no options left — and hope you like what destiny chose for you.

*Lynne Krause is the Chief Innovation Officer for BBTD Inc and can be reached at: [bbtdinc@mac.com](mailto:bbtdinc@mac.com)*

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## **Back to that Old Box — Peter De Jager**

Peter de Jager is a speaker/writer/consultant on the issues relating to the Rational Assimilation of the Future. He has published hundreds of articles on topics ranging from Problem Solving, Creativity and Change to the impact of technology on areas such as privacy, security and business. His articles have appeared in The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Futurist and Scientific American.

More at <http://www.technobility.com>

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## **Taking Responsibility:**

### **The weakness of “we” and the importance of “I” in innovation**

**Bob Eckert and Jonathan Vehar**

Bob Eckert and Jonathan Vehar are Senior Partners with New & Improved, LLC. N&I is a global firm focusing on the people side of innovation through training, facilitation, executive coaching and organizational development consultation. You can find out more about them at

[www.newandimproved.com](http://www.newandimproved.com)



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## **Animal Crackers: Adaptations to Capture the Problem-Solving Imagination**

**Stephen Grossman and Peter Lloyd**

Steve Grossman is an internationally recognized consultant in innovation. He is a physicist and inventor with nine patents. He has taught, trained, and consulted in business creativity for the past 25 years, and authored two books and over 30 articles in trade and academic publications on the challenges involved in generating and taking great ideas to great ideas to the marketplace. Peter Lloyd is a songwriter, author, ghostwriter, copywriter, and content provider based in Newport, KY. The Animal Crackers philosophy can be downloaded from

<http://gocreate.com/animal>

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## **Creativity and the Garbage Can — Chris Barlow**

Dr. Christopher Barlow is a researcher, consultant, professor, and author who has been involved in the management and teaching of team creativity and strategic thinking for more than thirty years. He has educated managers as a business professor for the last fifteen years, currently serving on the faculty of the College of Business Administration of University of Illinois-Chicago as Director of Experiential Learning as well as Senior Associate of the Howe School Alliance for Technology Management at Stevens Institute of Technology. More on Dr. Barlow can be found at <http://www.cocreativity.com>

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## **Book Review**

**The Seven Levels of Change: Different Thinking for Different Results 3rd Ed., by Rolf Smith (Tapestry Press, 2007)**

**Trisha Garwood**

Tricia Garwood is an instructor for the Disney College Program. Prior to joining The Walt Disney Company she was a consultant in the Philadelphia area.

# BACK TO THAT OLD BOX

by Peter De Jager

## Thinking outside the box?

### First give some thought to where the box came from

Despite the classic, almost legendary, status of the aphorism “Think outside the box,” it contains a subtle flaw. As a description of what the creative process is all about, it’s a brilliant distillation of the core concept *Think differently!* However, as a recipe for how to be creative, this famous quote is a dismal failure. A standard response from someone hearing it for the first time is, “There’s a box? What box?”

As an example of this all-too-human response in action, consider the following experiment. Separate your group into teams of two to three and hand each team a new deck of playing cards. The more nearly pristine the cards — if possible, still shrink-wrapped with the sticker price attached — the better.

Instruct the teams to build a tower of cards on the table in front of them. Give them a time limit of five minutes and instruct them that during this time they may not ask any questions. They are also told to use no other props except the cards and the tabletop.

A typical team will manage to create a “tower” just one card high, while an extraordinary team might deliver a tower three cards high. But every now and then a genius team will emerge with a tower 10-15 cards high. They’ll accomplish this by overcoming the label of “playing cards,” and instead realize their resources consist of stiff pieces of cardboard, perfect for bending,

perfect for bending, tearing, and mutilating into perfectly good paper building blocks.

Those who can’t escape the self-imposed restrictions brought to the table by the mental label of playing cards fall into two distinct categories; those who never even think of bending or tearing the cards, and those who do think of this, but hold back because of the unspoken rule that says “You don’t bend or tear playing cards.”

The latter group is at least aware that they’re constrained within a “box” defined by the rules for handling playing cards. To increase creativity in this group, all one has to do is instill a single habit of questioning the restrictive rule they’ve uncovered.

The former group, however, is oblivious to the box around them — a box, for the most part, of their own creation. Here it is more difficult, though not impossible, to find a method by which they can become aware of what they don’t perceive.

One effective way to reduce the number of “invisible” boxes surrounding our actions is to remove labels and think of resources operationally, meaning in terms of what they can do, rather than what they are labeled.

We can bend playing cards, tear them, and yes, play cards with them. But the bending and tearing functions might be more useful attributes at this point in time for this given task.



The advice “Think outside the box” requires that we’re aware of the boxes surrounding us in the first place, as well as the fact that our thinking is contained and limited by them. A good step in that direction is recognizing that many of these boxes are self-imposed, but that we can also identify the behaviors that erect them. Here are a few common self-constraining concepts — with some simple approaches to revealing the invisible box.

### 1. We don’t listen to our own wisdom.

As a consultant, the most common problem presented to me for solution is best summarized in the following client statement: “It hurts when we do this.” When faced with that problem statement it’s tempting to respond with the punch line from the child’s “Doctor, Doctor” joke: “...Then stop doing it!”

The fact is that we know how to solve many of the problems facing us. All we need do is to accept that our existing behavior is not resulting in the desired outcome and therefore we should find another course of action. The “box” persists in endlessly repeating an action we know doesn’t work.

### 2. We don’t listen to the wisdom of outsiders.

The “Not Invented Here” syndrome is endemic. The irony is once again that whereas we recognize that we’re unable to get out of our thinking rut, yet we resist any injection of an external idea. The box in this instance is a double box. At the first level the box is lack of an internal solution. On the second level is the notion that to protect the status quo (ego?) we must also reject any external suggestions.

### 3. Only those from out of town possess wisdom.

This is the exact opposite of the proposition above. There’s a strongly held belief that unless you’re from far away you can’t possibly have a solution to a local problem. It’s as if geographical distance by itself bestows wisdom on the person giving advice.

Now I don’t want to totally eradicate this notion, because I make my living being the out-of-town expert. But the reality is that the person sitting in the cubicle next to you is just as likely to have a solution to your problem as the jetlagged talent from seven time zones east of you. Frequent-flyer miles do not boost IQ.

### 4. The simple isn’t complex enough.

We demand that our solutions be complicated and costly. If the problem has posed great difficulty in the past, then the solution cannot be simple. The reason for this is itself simple enough: if the solu-



tion is actually simple, then we must be at fault for not discovering it ourselves. We therefore must insist that solutions to our persistent problems be complicated and costly in order to protect our egos.

Here’s a simple example from the allegedly complicated world of organizational ethics.

If you’re willing to have your actions published on the front page of a national newspaper, then your actions are likely ethical.

Now that’s not a perfect solution to most ethical decision making, but it solves the majority of ethical issues by posing an operational definition that works.

### 5. Repetition devalues truth.

This one is closely related to “Simple isn’t complicated enough.” The great truths, the classical answers, are often considered clichés, “Do unto others as you’d have them do unto you,” “To thine own self be true,” “Look before you leap,” “Think globally, act locally.” These are all simple, commonly repeated phrases. But just because they’re common doesn’t, or at least shouldn’t, degrade the wisdom they contain.

They keep appearing because they have the core of truth.

All the above thought traps restrict our problem-solving ability. By needlessly constraining how we see the world, they limit our ability to think our way towards solutions. The irony is that these boxes aren’t imposed on us. There’s no one but ourselves to blame for building and living in them... and that brings to mind a sixth box-building strategy we’re seldom ready to consider: that we ourselves are the source of our biggest, most intractable problems. ⊕

# Taking Responsibility:

## The weakness of “we” and the importance of “I” in innovation

by Bob Eckert and Jonathan Vehar

Here are some *extremely* dangerous statements: “We need to be a great team!” “There is no I in team!” “We have to work together to succeed!” “You know how some people always get in the way of innovation?”— “People like that really make me angry!”

Dangerous — and potentially very destructive. “But wait,” you say... “that flies in the face of common practice!” Yes, and...

Take a step back and get curious.

Is your curiosity piqued? Are you alert to some new thinking? Good.

A key habit of the innovative brain is responsibility-taking. As innovation leaders, you and I need to see ourselves as the First Person: the one primarily responsible for turning problems into stories of success. Yes, we often need others to help in the mission of creative problem-solving, but you need to see yourself (as do I) as primarily responsible to make the difference. You and I are responsible to do what we can— as the Prime Movers — to energize the creativity that leads to innovation.

There is an important, albeit subtle, dynamic at play in our minds that can amplify innovation when we make this thought pattern conscious. The challenge is to develop the ability to observe it in ourselves so that when we’re not doing it, we can then pick a more produc-

tive thinking pattern to replace the limiting pattern.

Whenever I (as an individual) use language that indicates the group is responsible (as in, “we need to make that happen”), I mentally dilute my own accountability. While it is true that others also have responsibility, the only responsibility-taking I can really be in control



of is my own.

- Ask yourself which is the statement of an innovation leader: A) “Jim is not taking responsibility,” or B) “I haven’t yet figured out how to get Jim to take responsibility.”
- Which is a more powerful message? A) “We need to be a great team,” or B) “I’m going to bring my best to this effort--and I also need you to do so, because my efforts will not be enough.”
- Which is more likely to effect change in the future? A) “You’re responsible,” or B) “We’re responsible,” or even better, C) “I’m responsible, and so are you.”

In each case, the “B” choice is more likely to move the individual and the group forward by placing responsibility where it belongs: with the person(s) who will make it happen, rather than the vague and ambiguous concepts represented by the “A” statements.

What does a world-class football player think as he runs out onto the stadium field? “We need to be a great team in this match/game,” or “I’m going to be the best player I can possibly be, and I know my teammates are going to do the same.” What does a world-class surgeon think walking into the operating room, “We need to save this patient’s life,” or “I’m going to do everything in my power to ensure this patient survives.” What does a firefighter think reporting to the blaze, “We’re going to put

out this fire,” or “I need to concentrate on doing my part on this team to put out the fire.” If they’re really world-class, they’re focused on the latter, not the former. (Although the firefighter is focused on the latter — and the ladder.)

**The positive examples above show people putting their own responsibility in the center of their mental picture.**

This is what it looks like to radically take responsibility, and it’s what we see in the most effective — and most mature — people and teams at work around us.

A surface reading of what we’re — heck, I’m — saying here might

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Here are some innovation-fostering statements:

- “I need to be a great team member.”
  - “Rearranging the letters of ‘teamwork’ gets me at work.”
  - “I have to keep us working together so that we succeed (and it would be great if you did the same thing).”
  - “I have to figure out a way to help those folks see how they’re blocking innovation.”
  - “I have always let people like that make me angry... up until now.”
- 



lead to the thought, “That sounds like a self-centered egomaniac to me, not an innovation leader.” That may be true — unless it’s tempered by some other attitudes. Imagine all the above statements delivered with genuine curiosity and humility. Then imagine a group of people working together attempting to practice this radical responsibility-taking, recognizing

that they have the responsibility to make the team successful...just like everyone else in the group. You’ve just visualized the reality of a powerful group of change agents: an Innovation Team.

That which makes each of us who we are is our thoughts. The more skilled we can become at finding the thoughts that serve us — and then choose to think them — the more mature, wise, and effective we become. My world needs that effectiveness. My workplace needs that effectiveness. My family needs that effectiveness. If your world, workplace, and family need you to do the same work on yourself, then welcome to the team, kindred spirit. If they don’t, then take on the attitude of curiosity and humility, and re-read this article. If that doesn’t work, then you may need a reality check. Or be really courageous and ask your colleagues for some insight into your wisdom, maturity, and effectiveness...then be prepared to really be humble and curious as a result. ⊕

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# Animal Crackers

## *Adaptations to Capture the Problem-Solving Imagination* by Stephen Grossman and Peter Lloyd

Within the past 25 years, much of the research conducted on the mental mechanisms involved in creative thought has indicated that these are precisely analogous to Charles Darwin's ideas on evolution first published in his book *On the Origin of Species* in 1859.

In 1994 Stephen Grossman published an article in *The Journal of Creative Behavior* titled "Transcendence as a Subset of Evolutionary Thinking: A Darwinian View of the Creative Experience," outlining these ideas and suggesting applications for facilitators, teachers, and practitioners of creative problem solving. Subsequently Grossman and Peter Lloyd developed a unique integrated system for solving difficult business problems. "Animal Crackers" can be used solo or with groups — and is both fun and easy (<http://gocreate.com/animal>).

The theory behind each of the three phases of our evolutionary approach, which we call "Animal Crackers," is based on evolutionary science.

### Natural Selection

Darwin proposed that all creatures adapt to the ever-changing world by a process called Natural Selection. As species adapt from generation to generation, nature "selects" those species better suited to survive over their competitors. The intellectual essence of Darwin's argument is that change need not be planned or guided by some overarching intellect. On the

contrary, it occurs simply because some random mutation wins the chance to survive.

Darwin posits a three-phase process for evolutionary change. *Animal Crackers* guides human creativity through the same three phases, mimicking the natural human creative process.

Each of these phases will be explored in what follows. Each phase integrates the thinking of some giants in the creative field. We gratefully acknowledge their contributions and give attribution where appropriate.

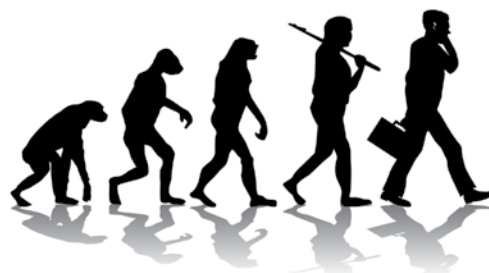
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**1. Extinction: Dissatisfaction with existing ideas as remedies for a situation causing concern.**

**2. Mutation: A chance event or random occurrence that produces a new idea.**

**3. Selection: A recognition system able to seize upon the new idea and use it to successfully replace existing patterns.**

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### Extinction

Robert Weisberg, in "Problem Solving and Creativity," emphasizes the need for the initial process of idea rejection in order to create. "Novel solutions to problems come about in an evolution as one gradually moves away from the conception with which one began. This incremental process is set in motion by feedback concerning the inadequacy of initial thoughts and ideas" (in *The Nature of Creativity*, R. Sternberg, editor, 1988).

The more convinced the problem solver that the old ideas don't work, the more receptive he can become to the new and unusual, which may hold the key to a brilliant solution.

As an example, consider what you do when you misplace your car keys.

- a. You look in places you habitually leave them. When this fails, you...
- b. Look again in places you habitually leave them, this time with more focus, intensity, and a touch of frustration. When this fails, you...
- c. Think about where you were prior to losing them and try to retrace your steps. When this fails, you finally...
- d. Make a random search in places you would not expect to find your keys, and if you're lucky—Eureka! You see them. Then, in a flash of recognition, you remember why they were there in the first place.

The most arresting part of this search episode is that your keys might have actually been on the periphery of your vision field when you began your search, but because you didn't expect to find them there, you couldn't see them. This process parallels new thinking: in which you must first extinguish old ideas before you can seize on or see a new one.

Animal Crackers “creates extinction” in its users by redirecting their concentration from the problem to their previous attempts to solve it. By focusing on their failed ideas, rather than on the problem itself, users not only can finally reject them, but also experience a form of “self-watching.” This is a powerful creative tool with which problem solvers become acutely aware of their own viewpoint. This awareness makes it easier to shift perspectives (Grossman, Rogers, & Moore, *Innovation Inc.*, 1988).

### Mutation

Having set the stage for accepting the unexpected as a potential solution, we now introduce seemingly random and provocative stimuli for consideration. Many well-known experts have written extensively about what these stimuli might be. DeBono introduced the notion of “provocation” (deBono, *Lateral Thinking*, 1972). Gordon and Prince use “mental excursions” and analogies as a fundamental construct in their Synectics model.

We have chosen surprising animal behaviors as provocations for a variety of reasons:

- a. Many great inventions, from the snowshoe to sonar and jet propulsion, have been inspired by studying animal behaviors and structures.
- b. Animal features offer a virtually unlimited variety of complex adaptations from which to choose.

c. Animals generally elevate the problem solver's mood; a positive mental state can create a greater receptivity to new ideas.

d. From early childhood, humans demonstrate an affinity for animals.

e. We love animals.

In the Mutation phase of the Animal Crackers process, we introduce steps to help users make new connections. While teaching creative problem solving, we have discovered that the most difficult task for our students is forming new relationships between two or more previously unconnected elements — what the great philosopher and writer Arthur Koestler called “bisociations” (Koestler, *The Act of Creation*, 1964). We demystify this task by leading users through a thorough process of considering animal traits in order to derive insights from each.

### Selection

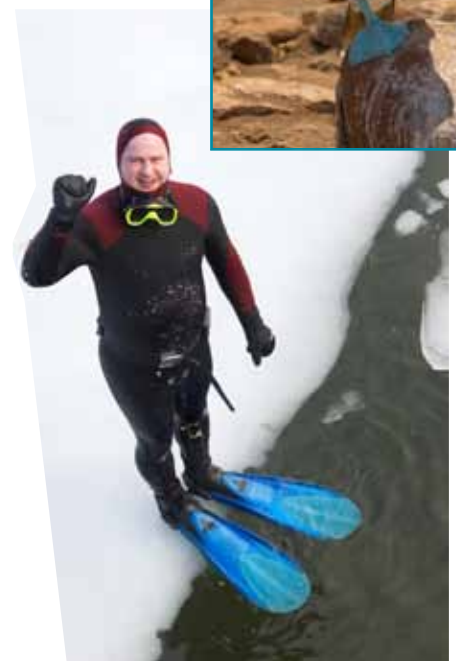
In the third and final phase of the Animal Crackers process, which in Natural Selection Darwin calls the “Struggle for Existence,” users translate and modify their selected animal adaptations from the Mutation phase to arrive at a workable solution.

The Selection phase is by far the most difficult. It's hard to make new ideas work. We are all too familiar with the sobering consequences of Murphy's Law. For this reason, we provide a technique for accessing the problem solver's deepest creative reserves by employing a modification of a technique suggested by George Prince (Prince, *The Practice of Creativity*, 1970). With the help of Survival and Extinction prompts, we allow users to both amplify the positive and eliminate the negative aspects of their solution — all without diminishing its original

and wonderful power.

There is also a fail-safe feature within the Selection phase. This important mechanism does not let the user give up. If, after all this work, the user encounters a barrier that seems insurmountable, he is sent back through the Animal Crackers process — this time, however, with an enhanced idea in the Extinction phase of what doesn't work. And that very clarity means a better chance of finding an idea that will. The essence of the creative act is the continual redefinition of the problem until an elegant solution presents itself. ⊕

*The Animal Crackers Manual* explains the Animal Crackers philosophy in detail, and can be downloaded from <http://gocreate.com/animal>.



# CREATIVITY AND THE GARBAGE CAN

by Chris Barlow

As I was covering the “Garbage Can Model” of organizational decision making with my MBA students, I was struck by its relevance to the deliberate approaches to creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, although it is more often used as evidence to argue that these processes are random.

Basically, the GC model does not see an organized world of managers and problem-solvers choosing the most important problems, seeking/inventing solutions, then getting good choices implemented by the appropriate decision-makers. Instead, it describes a world where unconnected problems and solutions float around organizations and the world (like things randomly thrown together in a garbage

can), driven by the winds of chance and politics, a world in which problem-solvers might just notice the fit between certain problems and solutions, and decision-makers might then choose to use the solutions to address these problems. It also fits the domain of entrepreneurship, in which needs and solutions emerge from ongoing changes in knowledge and markets. The perceptive entrepreneur notices the potential and constructs a way to deliver the solution profitably. This actually may be a more common source of innovations, but it ignores the potential of deliberate intervention.

This entrepreneurial model is similar in many ways to the “meme theory” developed by Richard Dawkins in which ideas and concepts float from person to person and social system to social system like viruses in the population or bits of DNA. In this organic model, people and organizations are merely vessels to transport and deploy specific sets of memes. Communication, learning, and thinking are thus processes of transferring, altering, and combining memes in new and different ways.

One critical insight of Dawkins’ model is that the dispersion, evolution, and persistence of these ideas/memes has less to do with their



truth or value and more to do with processes that spread and accept them. For example, ideas supporting racial and gender prejudice spread less because of any validity and more because of the satisfaction it gives to those who maintain and spread them. In the same way, certain jokes are rapidly transmitted, while others disappear from the environment. Within a company, engineers are more likely to be attracted by technical ideas for solving a problem, whereas marketing will be more attracted to marketing-based approaches. Companies can fail strategically because the ideas and actions critical to their success are not those that interest the decision-makers. A restaurant's long-term success may be more affected by the cleanliness of the toilets, while the manager may be far more interested in inventing new menu items.

Both these models are great for cynics who want to argue that there is no use in trying to make things better because outcomes are just luck guided by the unchangeable dysfunctional processes of people and social systems. However, accepting these models can also provide creative leaders and facilitators with guidance to show how deliberate creativity and innovation processes can — and do — succeed.

### **Increasing the Chance of Connections**

Societies and organizations structure the interactions of people such that some combinations of knowledge and perspective are more common than others. People in the same neighborhood or same department are more likely to share and combine ideas and perspectives. We label as creativity outcomes that emerge from less-

common combinations and associations to provide a benefit. There is a classic commercial in which two people accidentally mix their foods — peanut butter and chocolate — and discover they really like the result, thereby inventing a classic candy, Reese's. A lot of creativity is more a mixing of thoughts than physical collisions, but again we have unlikely mixings and recognition of creative results by someone who can see the potential. Creating and harvesting the ideas from less-

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**Many problem solvers do not seem to recognize that even a "great idea" that repels its beneficiaries is not a great idea. It is an unfinished idea.**

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likely interactions, whether through smokers in a doorway, job rotation, or structured cross-functional teams, increases the likelihood of new and different, and possibly better, meme combinations or associations of problems and solutions.

While any new combination may harbor potential, deliberate leaders/seekers of creativity know that rarer combinations are superior to others. If parts of a problem are tightly connected, but the people in those areas are conflicted, there is a benefit in bringing them together — if you know how to help them work together effectively.

Of course, those interested in deliberate creativity know there are ways to increase the productivity of those interactions through increased insight and more creative communication. Simply getting people with varying viewpoints to listen to each other and to seek synergy instead of "fighting for agreement" can produce outstanding results.

### **Problem Sensitivity and Satisficing**

Recognizing potential in combinations and ideas is not as easy as it sounds. Not everyone is walking around with a list of problems in the mind they want to solve. The Post-it is a famous example of a solution that created its own need. No one perceived a problem before the solution was created. When the Xerox machine was invented, people could not figure out why someone would think there was

any problem with carbon paper and mimeograph. We are all tolerating all kinds of annoyances because we have learned to accept them. Herb Simon won the Nobel Prize for pointing out that people did not seek the best solution, but rather were "satisfied" by choosing a solution that was "good enough" and moving on. This tolerance for the suboptimal can block us from seeing the potential in a new combination or idea. (As a type of closure, it also gives us peace of mind.)

Creativity facilitators use many methods for raising problem awareness, some as simple as asking people to make a wish: "What would you do with the money if you won the lottery?" Sharing such wishes, especially the "impossible" ones, with others increases the likelihood of a creative opportunity emerging. Even more useful are discussions of blocking factors for different wishes, such as "We could have electric cars — if only the batteries had more capacity per pound and charged faster."

### **Causality and Intention**

Some new combinations or ideas can show an immediate connection to their potential — the chocolate mixed with peanut butter tastes good. Other ideas involve a long

chain of intention and effect linking them to the ultimate benefit. Helping knowledgeable people separate out the causal linkages and intentions can be a powerful tool to spot more distant potentials. One powerful approach is the question “Why” used in various approaches to deliberate creativity. The field of Value Engineering calls it “function analysis” when we examine a thing or action to determine its desired effects or benefits. A wrist watch not only displays the time; it can indicate status, decorate the person, display affiliation with some group, etc. Intriguingly, the function of displaying the time costs the least, whereas most of the value of a wristwatch lies in the other functions.

The classic creativity example of “Don’t raise the bridge, lower the water” is trivially obvious once you ask the question, “What is the function (the why) of raising the bridge?” Teaching people to apply this insight tool in their thinking can greatly accelerate problem solving and innovation.

As a side note, there is a danger in the question “Why?” because in English it has two different meanings — “What was the cause of this?” and “What is/was your intention with this?” Problem-solving or quality programs trying to return a system to a former state can derive a lot of benefit from mapping the causal links, but innovators get far more benefit in focusing on the intention. I can tell you why the Y2K crisis happened, or why our keyboards are designed to slow down our typing, but these rationales are no help in finding new opportunities or solutions.

## Designing Evolutionary Success

Memes are the outcome of evolution applied to ideas. The lesson for creativity is that the processes of acceptance can be quite different from the issues of idea quality. Pharmacists have long known that some medicine is unlikely to be taken without some sort of “sugar coating” that increases its appeal (or at least reduces its repulsiveness) to motivate the patient who benefits from taking it.

**...in English “Why” has two different meanings — “What was the cause of this?” and “What is/was your intention with this?”**

Many problem solvers do not seem to recognize that even a “great idea” that repels its beneficiaries is not a great idea. It is an unfinished idea.

Any deliberate problem-solving effort that fails to examine the realities and values of those whose action or acceptance is needed to implement ideas is just hoping to get lucky. On the other hand, the collaboration or inventor who does understand these acceptance issues is far more likely to invent solutions

that will actually be used effectively. Like an effective virus, these solutions rapidly “infect” the decision makers and action takers, who pass the idea/infection on to others.

But creativity efforts have another critical role here. Creativity changes expectations. The process of creatively examining and integrating the many issues, perspectives, and values in a situation leads to new perspectives that make better solutions obvious. A leader who can handle the conflicts and the authority dynamics (including those who must change in the interaction process), not only gets better ideas, but alters the expectations of the decision makers and action takers, increasing their acceptance of the new possibilities.

So while researchers might see a chaotic world of luck driving innovation, we can decide that we will affect the mixing, enhance the recognition of possibilities, and shape ideas into alternatives that not only provide a benefit, but actually work to attract those whose actions matter.

I hope that somewhere in the mess of concepts and speculations above are some elements to fit issues you are trying to solve and enable you to be even more effective in your efforts. ⊕

## Start Your Own Local Chapter

ACA’s regional and student chapters provide a vehicle for people clustered in a geographical region to engage in networking opportunities with each other. For help creating your own regional chapter contact Phyllis Blees, Director of ACA Chapter & SIG Development:

1510 Falcon Ledge Drive  
Austin, TX 78746-6104  
Phone: 512.327.8860  
Fax: 512.327.5190

Skype: phyllis.blees  
E-mail: phyllis@austin.rr.com

# Book Review

## ***The Seven Levels of Change: Different Thinking for Different Results***

**3rd Ed., by Rolf Smith  
(Tapestry Press, 2007)**

The *7 Levels of Change: Different Thinking for Different Results* is self-described as a “Field Guide for Innovators, a handbook for thinking different, for doing different, and getting different results.” Heavy emphasis on different? Absolutely. As the opening line of the book definitively proclaims, “This book is different.”

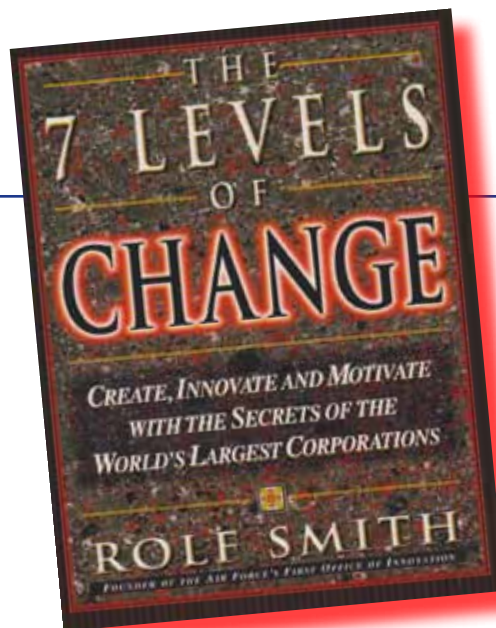
How different? The overall organization is unquestionably distinctive. You can start reading anywhere you like, beginning, middle, or end. Simply read what interests you. Scan through the book and benefit from research, decipher diagrams, analyze activities. Enjoy a ten-minute overview by flipping through the corners of the pages, which contain Power Point slides with key content. For visual learners there are comprehensive mindmaps. For more structured learners, every chapter identifies mindshifts, thought processes, pros and cons, stresses and fears, together with specific tools for use individually or with others to help motivate and manage change. Wide margins invite readers to capture their own thoughts.

Author Rolf Smith founded the first military Office of Innovation; since his retirement from the Air Force, he has been leading companies on “Thinking Expeditions,” where they immerse themselves in innovation and change management. The breadth of his experience informs and enriches each page with both sound theory and

practical application.

The 7 Levels are premised on the concept that you can most reliably solve problems and obtain improved results when you think about your thinking; thus creating a mindshift — a new perspective that enables the reader to view each situation for its unique potential. Whether working in schools, the military, business, or government, such meta-cognition is fundamental for managing change. Most organizations are doing things the way they’ve always done them and hoping to get improved results. As Albert Einstein said, “The world we have created today has problems which cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them.” Therefore we either “innovate or die.”

The book identifies 7 Levels of change and the kinds of thinking necessary to actualize each change. The first three levels exemplify Sigma 1 or normal thinking, the type people engage in about 68% of the time. Level 1 focuses on effective change and challenges us to ask ourselves why we are doing what we are doing. Readers are encouraged to spend ample time at Level



1 because a thorough idea foundation expands future possibilities; we become fully aware and catalyze ourselves from thinking to doing. Level 2 guides us to efficiency, where we save time, money, and resources by asking ourselves

whether we are doing things right and making necessary adjustments. At Level 3 we concentrate on Improving and force ourselves to look at everything with an improvement philosophy.

Levels 4 and 5 move the reader into Sigma 2 or different thinking, the type used about 28% of the time. Level 4 challenges us to cut anything standing in the way of progress — to assess everything for its contribution toward moving us forward and to challenge rules, habits, inefficiencies, and negative thinking. Level 5 pushes us to copy or borrow ideas — to do what others are doing. But far from plagiarizing, Level 5 enables us to view the world as a place of infinite inspiration. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, while we are encouraged to ask ourselves, “How many uses are there for this wheel?” or “How can the concept of wheel give me a new perspective?”

Levels 6 and 7 represent Sigma 3, different thinking which most people engage in about 4% of the

time and at which stage we are at greatest risk for failure and ridicule as well as at greatest potential to engage in radical, breakthrough ideas — this thinking can yield amazing results. Level 6 change is about different doing — those things no one else is doing — and this level of thinking invites us to reverse our assumptions, push the envelope, and enter riskier territory. Level 7 change is impossible change. In this zone we must learn to think intuitively, forcefully, imaginatively, and with a complete suspension of judgment.

This comprehensive paradigm for thinking can be effective both individually and as a template for understanding and facilitating interpersonal processes. Being able to identify the level at which someone is operating enables us to understand and meet them where they are. When we meet others in their comfort zones and speak their language, it is easier to then direct cognition to higher levels of change and more challenging levels of thinking, including collaborative efforts.

I originally purchased this book as a supplement to a college course I teach on Creativity and Innovation because it was full of useful activities. Sitting down with it for the first time, I was further captured by its original organization and intriguing content. Now I use it as the main text for my course. Rolf Smith's 3rd edition is an excellent field guide for business leaders, educators, entrepreneurs — or anyone who thrives on continually and consciously moving forward in processing information as the raw material of creativity. ⊕

*-Trisha Garwood*

## ACA 2010 International Conference

March 21 – March 24  
Philadelphia, PA



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The Gap is where innovative people, teams, and organizations live.

The Gap is where applied creativity makes the critical difference between success and failure.

Join us in exploring life in the gap. If you are in business, academe, science, industry, marketing, new product development, or any field where creative thinking is required you'll want to join us as we examine how to define problems and identify opportunities, select the right tools and techniques, build great teams and apply creative leadership to thrive in the gap between now and an exciting and rewarding new future.

Conference information can be found at:

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