Claybury International

Growing the Servant Heart

Leading the Journey
The Servant Leader's Guide
to Creative Solutions

Student Notes

*These notes accompany the **Leading the Journey**
The Servant Leader's Guide to Creative Solutions
on-line course module available at Christian-leadership.org*

Mike Waddell One Another Ministries

6th February 2015

OA-2784-01-150206 The Servant Leader's Guide to Creative Solutions

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Objectives

These notes accompany the **Leading the Journey – The Servant Leader's Guide to Creative Solutions** lesson which is the last element in the **Growing the Servant Heart** on-line course. This course is available free of charge at academy.christian-leadership.org

The goals of the Christ-centred servant leader are to live out the servant hearted character of Christ as a leader and enable those whom they lead to achieve their full potential. Through the **Growing the Servant Heart** programme we have looked at many facets of both of these goals. And we now come to the last element of the programme: Creative thinking.

As we will learn in this lesson, when it comes to thinking we have natural tendency to think along the same old lines as we have always done. This shows itself most when we struggle to find ways of addressing the challenges, problems and opportunities we will inevitably face. Often, therefore, we do not find a good solution let alone the best solution, and we simply do what we did before. Because of this tendency we apply solutions to problems which do not work at all or at best work for a while and then problem reappears. This is not the way for those we lead to achieve their full potential.

This lesson is about how to stimulate our thinking processes so that we can think differently, finding creative and innovative solutions to the challenges we face. It's about how to change perspective so we can look at things from a different angle and so discover new ways of thinking that lead to new ways of doing.

The **Growing the Servant Heart** programme is about providing practical tools to help the Christian leader function day-to-day. As such, the tools and approaches have been selected because they are supportive of the values and objectives of the Christ-centred servant leader.

At the end of this lesson, as the student, you will have:

- Considered creativity from a Biblical perspective.
- Examined the traits that constrain our thinking.
- Discovered thirteen tools to help you change perspective and think creatively and innovatively.
- Explored five collaborative approaches to creative thinking.
- Considered how to select the best ideas and refine them into practical solutions.

At the conclusion of this lesson we would recommend that you review all that you have learned about being a Christ-centred servant leader, especially the very first element – **Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom.**

Prerequisites

This module of **Growing the Servant Heart** can stand alone but is best considered having completed **The Jesus Model, Leading Through Insight, Leading Through Others and Leading Through Relationships** modules. These can be found at academy.christian-leadership.org

Creativity - A Biblical Perspective

Opening Reflections

- **Take a Moment**
  - In what ways can creativity be expressed?
  - How do you think that man's creativity is linked to God?
  - Should our creativity be dependent on or independent of God? Why?

Essential Creativity

In the beginning, God created ......

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ......

> *So God created man in his own image,*
> *in the image of God he created him;*
> *male and female he created them.*

...... And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 1:1-31

One of the things we understand from the first chapter of Genesis is that God is creative. He created the world, and all that is in it from nothing. The writer to the Hebrews sums it up in chapter 11 and Verse 3:

> *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.*

God was not copying anything nor following anyone's lead because in the first place there was nothing apart from God. God conceived the Creation in his mind and commanded it to exist and so he created mankind and the universe in which we live.

When we look at Creation, for instance plant life and bird life, we see such variety and riotous abundance of forms, colour and functions. We can only conclude that God is not simply creative but he is awesomely and abundantly creative in the extreme. There are not enough words to describe the magnificence of his creativity.

We know too from Genesis that God created mankind in his own image. Because God is spirit and man is material, we know that this refers to character. And so we see that God made man, amongst other things, to be creative. We do not have the power to make stuff from nothing, nor to create life. We do, however, have the ability to conceive things in our minds and bring them into being – albeit, unlike God, we can only make things from that which exists.

The Practical Creativity of Craftsmanship

> *"See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.*
>
> *Exodus 31:2-5*

When God commissioned the construction of the Tabernacle he explained to Moses that he had provided people with necessary abilities and skills. Head of the project was Bezalel who was an intelligent spiritual man. God had also equipped him with the necessary artistic craftsmanship to make the beautiful things that God had commissioned. God had made Bezalel and others to be artistically gifted.

It is in the area of art and craft that we usually apply the term creativity, and often we limit it to artistic fields such as painting, sculpting, design, music, poetry and the like. We see God's artistry when we look at the wonders of his creation, and we understand that artistic creativity in man is a reflection of God's creative character.

The Creativity of Problem Solving

 However, creativity is not limited to the artistic.

> *To me…… this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ……*
>
> *Ephesians 3:8-11*

The Apostle Paul's ministry was to bring the mystery of the Gospel to light for everyone, especially the gentiles. The Gospel *"was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord"*. Thus, Paul tells us that the Gospel was conceived in the depths of eternity which means well before the Creation and it was brought to reality in creation through Jesus. In our context this tells us that creativity is as much about what we might call "problem solving" as it is about material outcomes. The Gospel, devised and created ahead of time by God, solved the problem of the Fall and man's consequent alienation from God.

So one of the ways that God's creativity is reflected in man is the ability to devise and implement solutions to problems. It is this that enables us to devise plans.

The Need for God's Solutions

Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labour in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.

Psalm 127:1

*We recall our considerations from the previous lesson **Encouraging Vision and leading Change with a servant Heart.***

In this verse of Psalm 127 we see there are two objectives in view: One is that the city remains safe and in order to achieve this watchmen have been recruited, trained, deployed and supervised. The other is for a house of some sort. There are various interpretations of what this house is but the bottom line is that someone has a vision of a building that does not yet exist, possibly a home. They see it in their mind's eye, they plan it and they build it.

But here Solomon is telling us that, as a general principle, unless our activities, and hence our creative intents and plans, are aligned with God then they will be in vain. However creative our plans may be they are worthless, they will come to nothing. Not being in accord with his plans and purposes, God does not exercise his sovereign power to bring them about.

As members of God's Kingdom family, seeking to bring honour and glory to him this has massive implications. When we set out in search of a creative solution we need to turn to God and seek his guidance and direction. Then we need to do it his way.

Seeking God's way

In the episode of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, God tells Daniel what the dream was and what it meant. Daniel praises God and declares this about him:

Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.
He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;

Daniel 2:21

Wisdom belongs to God and he is the source of wisdom and understanding. Therefore James could write:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 1:5-8

The word translated wisdom in Daniel 2: 20 & 21 refers to "the knowledge and ability to make the right choices at the opportune time"[1]. The word for wisdom in the James reference is slightly different referring to insight into the true nature of things[2] which is the basis of using one's mind effectively. It is this same word that the scholars who produced the Septuagint used when translating Daniel 2: 20 & 21 to Greek. So, we see that God equips our minds to function with wisdom, especially when we ask him with faith.

God at Work in You

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12-13

In this passage, and the verses that follow, Paul is exhorting the Philippian Christians to live out the kind of life that flows from salvation resulting from the blood and sacrifice of Christ. Before describing some of the character traits of such a God honouring life he points out that their ability to live it results from God working in them. So it's the Christian's responsibility to live that life but it is God who empowers us to do so.

God gave us minds and intellectual capacity and faculties. If we allow, he will empower us to use our minds well, bringing pleasure to him just as living out the character Paul describes will bring pleasure to him.

Keeping in Tune with God

The problem with fallen man is that we use our minds to please ourselves not God. So just because we can devise a creative solution does not necessarily mean that the solution will be a pleasure to God. And as we have seen in Psalm 127:1, even if the solution is in line with God, we still need to be sure to bring it into existence his way. Therefore we need to seek God. We can ask him for wisdom and he will grant it. The only condition is that we do not doubt him. Thus we can consecrate our intellectual and creative activities and expect that he will guide us in them through granting us wisdom and understanding.

Given the fallen nature of mankind we will do well to keep an eye open to the possibility that, in our creative thinking and problem solving efforts, we may have branched off from God's path onto our own. Then we must regain his path as soon as we notice we have left it.

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[1] Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (Vines) - hokmah – Strong's reference 2451
[2] Vines – Sophia – Strong's Reference 4678.

Reflections
- **Take a Moment**
  - How would you answer these questions now?
    - In what ways can creativity be expressed?
    - How do you think that man's creativity is linked to God?
    - Should our creativity be dependent on or independent of God?
      - Why?
  - How can we ensure that our creativity is dependent upon God?

The Wonderful but Lazy Brain

Before we look at the various techniques we can use to stimulate our ability to solve problems and devise creative solutions we need to spend a little time understanding how we think.

Marvellous Pattern Matching

God has made our brains marvellously. Think for a moment about how you can recognise one face in a crowd when you see it. Unless there was some really distinctive characteristic, like a scar or a birth mark, you would find it very hard to describe a face to someone so they could recognise the person. Your description would fit a lot of people. Show the other person a photograph, however, and most times they would be successful in recognising the person for whom you are looking.

- **Take a Moment**
  - Think about how you would describe a face in general terms and write down the rules that you think of. (This is not how to identify a specific individual but simply how to recognise that a face is a face).
    - You will need to describe the features of a face. (e.g. how would you describe a nose or an eye for instance.)
    - Having written down some rules remember the exceptions too. e.g. hair is on top of the head and the chin has no hair except when the person is bald and has a beard and so on.)

It's not so easy to write down rules that help to recognise that a face is a face.

You can not only recognise what a face is but you can recognise who that face belongs to. Just think of how many people you recognise: Family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, and people you see on TV or at the cinema or in photographs in magazines and newspapers. People you see now and people you used to see in the past. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people.

Facial recognition software finds the task of recognising individual faces very difficult. We can match real people to 2 dimensional photos but facial recognition systems find this too difficult to be reliable. The best systems use 3 dimensional models and then also analyse the surface texture of the skin. But they can be defeated by a range of factors such as light reflection from eye glasses. God made us with competent facial recognition as standard.

Basically our brains work by building and matching patterns. We store the patterns of all those faces in our memories and can then pick out and identify one or more individuals we know from a crowd. We do this without thinking and without rules because our brains match patterns. What is so simple and straightforward for us is very, very difficult for computers

Our pattern matching processes are not confined to visual images but determine how our brains handle all the information we receive and process. So, when abstract information is presented to us we attempt to associate it with other information in some form of pattern. This leads to difficulties which limit how well we can solve problems.

One issue with pattern matching is that when our brains receive information concerning new, or slightly, but significantly different situations they force fit that information to previously formed patterns. This artefact of our brain processes means that we can miss new patterns and important differences.

Building patterns in our minds
Let's look at this with this simple illustration using shapes.

We are going to receive information represented by a series of triangles. We take these and associate them into some kind of pattern which we then use to process subsequent triangles. We do this because it's the easiest thing for our brains to do and for this reason it's been said that we have "lazy brains".

So here we go, the first triangle appears.

The next one appears and we see that we can associate the triangles in a way that makes a square.

A third triangle appears. We recognise this now in line with pattern we have built. It's the first half of a square.

The fourth triangle is easy. It's the next part of that unfinished square.

So now we have set up the pattern that recognises the association between squares and triangles. It looks good and it works.

- **Take a Moment**
    - What observations do you have about the pattern we have just made and the associations it implies?

The patterns we make are dependent upon how we receive the information; that is the volume and order in which we receive it.

- **Take a Moment**
    - If all four triangles arrived at the same time what patterns would we make?

There are many different patterns we can construct from 4 right-angle triangles. Even the patterns I have illustrated are limited in the ways that the shapes are assembled. It's

interesting that when I first drew them it never occurred to me that there were other legitimate ways I could assemble them.

- **Take a Moment**
  - In what other ways can you make patterns from the triangles?

Here are some more ways we can assemble them into patterns.

Force fitting patterns
Now back to the squares.

- **Take a Moment**
  - What happens when we receive triangles of a different type and shape? For instance isosceles triangles?
    - Following the original pattern how would you fit them together?

Following the path of least resistance we would fit them together in a similar way to the right-angle triangles. We see they are triangles, identify our well proven triangle patterns and make a skewed square, a parallelogram.

However, whilst this is a legitimate pattern it's not the natural pattern for isosceles triangles. With more triangles they readily form a hexagon and hexagons fit together very neatly.

Growing well-trodden pathways
This pattern building process is rather like the way that footpaths naturally arise across an area of grass. First one person takes the natural route, then another and another. Each time the grass is flattened some more. More and more people use the emerging path because it's the easiest route so the grass wears out and the path hollows out, giving the landscape a memory. We may not travel that way for a while but when we do the well-trodden path is still there to follow.

Similarly, the patterns we build in the way we think become well-trodden pathways and we continue to use them even though they limit our ability to process information and respond to situations appropriately. In fact they can lead us to wrong conclusions and actions. When we come across a problem, a challenge or an opportunity our lazy brains tend to force fit the facts to a previous pattern. That pattern includes a solution, one that may have been right last time but is not right this time. The result is that we think we have solved the problem but it keeps coming back.

Another metaphor for this process is how flowing water on seemingly flat land begins to follow a path. As more water flows those paths become rivulets, small at first but soon they become channels, then streams, then rivers, then great arteries in the landscape governing the movement of water, people and commerce.

Similarly, like a river cutting a channel our thoughts form patterns and as they flow these patterns are reinforced. They become ingrained, determining our perspectives and outlooks, directing the way we think now and in the future. They determine the way we analyse situations and constrain the repertoire of strategies with which we respond.

We are trained to think, or are we?

Take a look at this image. What do you see?

Was it just black shapes or did you see something else? Take a look at the next version of the image. The problem is that we naturally look at the strong images and when we were taught to read we were taught that the important stuff was in the black marks on the page.

So we can see the way we have been taught affects the way we look at things and the way we think. Edward de Bono calls this vertical thinking and it applies to other areas too. Think about mathematics for instance. We have generally been taught to solve mathematical problems in a procedural way.

- **Take a Moment**
  - There is a knock-out soccer competition in which 255 teams are entered.
    - How many matches are needed to find the competition champions? Have a go, but don't pause the video but come up with answer in the 10 seconds before we move on.

What was your answer?

You probably haven't completed it yet. Pause the video and see where you get to.

Most people start with the model of the classic competition tree structure in your mind's eye. The ladder with teams paired off and the winners moving on to the next round and so on. You were probably confused by the odd number as it means that were would have been a bye in the first round at least. Then it gets confusing. You would be trying to calculate how many matches in each round.

Those of you who were familiar with another pattern, that of binary numbers, may have quickly got to 255 matches less one (256 is a binary value.) But you probably did not get there within the ten seconds or so of the pause. You were using a short cut to complete the same "How many matches in a round" calculation. But that short cut would only work where the number of teams was close to an obvious a binary number. It wouldn't easily work with 223, for instance. But you would have been looking for another way of doing the calculation. (If you want to understand binary numbers then see what you can find on the internet.)

Both of those approaches focused on the number of match winners at each stage of the competition. Both used procedural methods that we have been taught.

There is another approach which considers the losers.

- How many losers will there be in the competition?   254
- How many losers are there in a match?   1
- Therefore there must be **254** matches.

This approach is quite different than the way we have normally been taught to think and it would work for any number of teams in a knock out competition.

So, from each of these illustrations, the triangles, the black shapes and the football competition, we can see that if we look at things from a different perspective we can find different approaches to the problems, challenges and opportunities that we face. Otherwise our ability to find solutions to the challenges we face is limited, perhaps even blocked by the way we think, how we have been educated and trained.

Switching Tracks

Using another metaphor, the way we think is like running along railway tracks, we are constrained by how we think just as a train is constrained by the tracks.

Henry Ford is attributed with these words:

> *"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."*

Albert Einstein is attributed with this insight:

> *"Insanity: Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."*

The essence of both quotes is that if we desire to see a different outcome to that with which are familiar, we need to do things differently.

The problem is enabling ourselves to think differently. We need to switch tracks, gain a different perspective and, through different thinking, find new, different, innovative solutions. Switching tracks breaks the patterns of our thinking and allows us to reassemble the information we have in ways different to our regular patterns of thought.

Edward de Bono calls this change in perspective "Lateral Thinking" and the process of switching tracks he calls "provocation". That is provoking different perspectives and different ways of thinking (Lateral Thinking, Penguin). Roger von Oech likens it to a "Whack on the Side of The Head" (Warner Books).

Such an ability to think in new ways allows us to gain new insights and devise creative solutions to the challenges we face; to innovate. In our context we will define creativity as "the generation of novel and useful ideas" (David Hall, The Ideas Centre). This what we seek to do with creative thinking; to generate ideas which, when put into practice, do things in new and different ways. Not for the sake of being new and different but because the outcomes are better.

There are many tools we can use to help us switch tracks and gain the advantage of these different perspectives. We will look at some of these approaches in this lesson. The books referred to in the Bibliography provide the details of many different tools which can stimulate creative thinking.

The benefits of thinking creatively

The benefits of addressing these issues with our thinking include:

Resolving resilient problems

We find that some problems seem to defy solution – they are resilient, they won't go away. There is no way we can find to resolve them. There are some problems (often called

"wicked" problems) that do indeed defy solution. All we can do is respond as best we can. However, sometimes the problem does not defy a solution, it's just that we cannot find the solution. When this happens we are probably constrained by our habitual ways of thinking. We need new perspectives to allow new and creative thinking to find the solution.

Resolving recurrent problems

These are those problems that we think we have fixed but they keep coming back. When this happens we have probably forced the situation to fit a similar pattern to one we encountered before and applied the solution belonging to that pattern. We have been unable to see the issue as it really is, forcing it to be the same as another issue we had already solved. The result is that the solution we apply is at best only partial. Thus the problem seems to be fixed but re-emerges some time later.

Successfully Addressing Opportunities

Opportunities are really special types of problem. Nothing is going wrong but there is an opportunity to gain some kind of advantage. So, in order to avoid turning this opportunity into a recurrent problem we need to find the best, appropriate approach. Creative thinking helps us look at it from various perspectives and enables us to find innovative ways of successfully exploiting the opportunity.

Finding new and better ways of doing things

In **The Effective Practices of a Servant Leader** we saw one leadership practice that was called "Challenging the Process". This was about finding ways to do things better so that our team can be more effective. Creative thinking allows us to meet this challenge. It also allows us to see opportunities we never knew were there and find ways to develop new services and solutions in our ministry.

Keeping in Step with God

As we apply our God given faculties we need to do so prayerfully and carefully in order to ensure that we are going God's way.

We need to ask for God's wisdom, guidance and insight as we seek to understand the issues, gain different perspectives and determine a solution.

When we asses our ideas and choose a solution to the challenge we need to engage with God in prayer that his guidance might be included in the assessments process.

Blocking New Ideas

There are a number of typical attitudes that we may encounter which can limit our ability to think creatively and so block our ability to generate new ideas. In his Book "**A Whack on the Side of the Head**" (WarnerBooks) Roger von Oech examines these attitudes:

The Right Answer

Sometimes we believe that there has to be a right answer to a problem, and by implication this means that there is only one possible answer. Whilst that may be true for specific things like arithmetic and spelling, it's not true in general.

Some problems are so complex that we can find no definitive answer at all, only a choice of responses, these are the "world hunger" type of questions. Some problems have the potential to be resolved in more than one way, none of which is necessarily any more or less right than any other. The choice is then down to other factors which cause us to select an approach that we think is best.

So when you think that there has to be a right answer, von Oech's advice is don't stop when you have found the first one. Look for the second, and when you have found that look for the third and the fourth, keep going until you choose to stop.

As we look at some of the techniques to help us generate new ideas you will see that different perspectives generate different answers, each of which is as valid as any of the others.

That's Not Logical

Many of us have a preference to think more logically than others. We think in definite, black and white terms: If this and that are true then this must be the consequence. In western schools at least, we tend to be taught to think that way. So we when we face a problem we get out the box of logic tools and set to work building a solution. However, that is not the only kind of thinking that is possible and not everything in life is logical, so logic is not the only way to look at things.

There are ways of thinking and gaining insights that do not follow the rules of logical thinking but they are, none the less helpful. For instance, describing a situation or a solution in terms of a metaphor can generate great insight and enable one to begin to grasp the germ of an idea. You may need to use logic afterwards to refine and develop the idea. Metaphors are useful at getting the creative juices flowing because they restate the subject in an unusual way, but in terms with which we are familiar. Thus they enable insight. Reflection upon the images and relationships they describe can stimulate new ideas.

- **Take a Moment**
  - Think on these two metaphors. What insights do you gain from them?

    An example adapted from G.K.Chesterton: *Progress means leaving things behind us, but the real idea of growth means leaving things inside us.*

    And from the Bible: *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5*

We Must Follow the Rules

Von Oech does not say that we must discard all rules. He challenges us to not to let our thinking be bound by unnecessary or obsolete rules and conventions which are impediments and which have no legal or moral dimension. These are often arbitrary and embedded in our culture. You will recall that our culture is "How we do things around here".

Such rules are a form of pattern which limit our thinking and constrain us to *doing what we've always done, and always getting what we've always got.* They "pigeon hole" our thinking and lead us down well-trodden paths, which block our ability to generate effective ideas.

Jesus' problem with Pharisee was not that they rejected God's laws but that they defined in minute detail, which God never provided, exactly how to keep them. God was interested in the heart they were interested in imposing regulated compliance and that limited the ordinary person's relationship with God.

- **Take a Moment**
  - Identify a issue or opportunity that needs to be addressed.
  - Reflect upon the rules and conventions that limit and constrain the solutions you can identify
    - What are they?
    - Turn them on their head
    - What are the outcomes?

Be Practical

The process of arriving at creative solutions often involves the intermediate step of impractical ideas which seem plainly silly or humorous. Laughter, humour and play are powerful stimulants for creativity.

Who are the most creative people that you know, using their imagination all the time?

Children.

Their creativity is intimately tied to their imagination which is stimulated by their play and fun. Engage in humour, engage in fun as you seek creative solutions.

Once you have the generated the creative ideas then will come the time for practical analysis and logical application as you develop and realise the solution. Being practical and being creative require different kinds of thinking. Imposing the filter of practicality will quench the attitude of creativity needed to discover the new ideas which you seek. Hold practical thinking at bay until you have some ideas to work with, then practicality becomes essential.

Play Is Frivolous

Roger von Oech has asked hundreds of thousands of people "During what kind of activities and situations do you get your ideas?"

Many answered along the lines of "When I'm facing a problem" at least as many answered along the lines of "When I'm not being serious but playing around".

He concludes that "necessity may be the mother of invention but play is certainly its father". Quite simply playfulness is a strong stimulant to creative thinking. One of the key drivers to the success of brainstorming is the "whacky idea". It may go nowhere itself but it will so often trigger successful ideas in other people.

It's Not My Area

Typically we all have specialisms and preferences concerning what interests us and what we do. These specialisms are valuable but have the ability to limit our thinking and with that limit our creativity. One thing that is helpful for us as individuals in this regard is to broaden our perspectives and take an interest in a broader range of different things, to go to new places, do new things and read outside our normal areas.

When problem solving, increase the diversity by including people from outside your area. A colleague of mine once worked for an electric power company. It was winter and they had a problem with heavy snow falls building up on the power lines which could break them. The solution was triggered by someone who had been a nurse in the Korean War. She recalled how the casualty evacuation helicopters used to blow the snow on the ground into mini blizzards. This led to the idea of flying helicopters over the power lines to blow the snow off.

A diverse and broad perspective increases one's ability to come up with creative ideas because things learned in one area may work in another, or may be just provide a metaphor which triggers a new idea.

Avoid Ambiguity

Ambiguity is the enemy of accuracy and precision. It leads to misunderstandings and mistakes. Therefore we learn to minimise and avoid ambiguity. This is one of the factors that causes us to think in narrow constrained ways; thinking only down one set of tracks.

However, situations and problems are often ambiguous and we need to get that different perspective in order to solve the problem.

- **Take a Moment**
    - ○ Take five letters from the following so that the remaining letters spell an English word without altering their order.

FAIMVELEETRTIECRASN

How did you approach this? Did you try to find five characters to remove and leave a word or did you remove the letters which spelt the words "five letters"? If you did the second thing then you got AMERICAN. If you did the first then who knows what you got.

~~F~~A~~I~~M~~VEL~~E~~ET~~R~~TIE~~C~~R~~AS~~N

The instructions were reasonable but ambiguous. Ambiguity often leads to there being more than one answer.

Making things too specific can stifle creativity so try rephrasing problems in an ambiguous manner and see where that leads.

Don't Be Foolish

Many people are embarrassed by what they consider to be the foolish or frivolous, especially when it happens during work time. However, because one's mind is more creative when it's at play, silly

ideas, which may go absolutely nowhere generate the sense of fun that helps others be creative. Even the silliest idea may have a spark of genius within; a spark that that triggers other ideas in the rest of the team. Some may be what are called intermediate impossibilities – more about those latter. Don't supress foolishness and fun during the creative process, it is the oxygen that allows the creativity in others to ignite.

It's Wrong to Get It Wrong

The West is a success driven culture. Even those of us who think we are not like that have been taught we've got to get it right. That's also a downside of our exam based education systems. Whilst there are many things where correctness is vital – a nuclear power station for instance – there are many where it's not.

One of those places is the creative generation of new ideas. In English this process is called "ideation". The steps that come after ideation will address the viability of the ideas and determine which should be taken forward as the solution. However, if that assessment is done when the ideas are being generated the creative spark will be put out and we end up with the same old same old ideas.

So, when ideas are being generated don't worry about whether they are right or wrong. At that stage there isn't a right or a wrong idea, so being wrong is not a possible error. One of the reasons is that even if your idea is not a successful solution it may stimulate the idea that becomes the solution. For this reason deliberately silly or crazy ideas should not be rejected during the process of ideation.

Scoping the Need for New Ideas

The first step of generating new ideas is to get to grips with the challenge, so that the need for and scope of the issue is clear. Only then can participants collaborate effectively. So a key step is to make sure that everyone involved is aligned on the same issue. The scope of the problem being addressed also needs to be kept in view because it is very easy to branch off down the wrong path and find solutions to another issue. If you are simply looking for new ideas to broaden your outlook and offering then this is not so much of a problem.

We will look at three techniques for helping to refine and understand and state the challenge:

- Problem Restatement
- Problem Division
- Problem Stretching

We will use the same example with each so that you can see the different perspectives that arise.

Problem Restatement

Problem restatement does exactly that. We start with some expression of the problem, and usually these are somewhat broad and unfocussed. Often we only have a hazy idea of the problem and our expression of the problem is therefore also hazy. The goal here is to open up our horizons by broadening perspectives in a way that also helps us be more definitive, if that is needed, and so bring the challenge into focus.

- First we write down our problem statement
- Then we look at the key words and ideas in the statement and list what they <u>might</u> mean
- Then we select from the lists and restate the problem.

Here is a simple example to illustrate:

A pastor feels that the people in his fellowship are not as effective in their service of God as could be the case. He states his problem as: *"How can I release people to serve?"* He then examines this question. I've set out the results of his consideration in the following table:

Table 1 Problem Restatement Example

Original Statement	Potential Meanings (Do I mean…..)
How	
Can	
I	Do I really mean me? or .. the ministry team? or the leadership? or Fred (a specific elder)? …..
Release	Release from what? From fear? From prison?. Do I mean equip them or motivate them?
People	Which people do I mean? Is this everyone? Just specific people? The Ministry Team? Or .....
To	
Serve?	How or who are they to serve? – the church neighbours, the lonely, the elderly, the homeless?.... What do I mean by serve? Worship God? Tidy up the church? Evangelise? Show agape love? Be servant leaders? ….

From this one or more focused statements can be derived which state more clearly what needs to be done and which can be addressed. For example:

> *How can the Ministry Team encourage and enable the core members of the church to show God's love to our neighbours?*

Thinking back to the previous lesson **Encouraging Vision and Leading Change with a Servant Heart** This could also be restated as a vision. For example:

> *That as a group of God's people, supported by the Ministry Team, we win the hearts of our neighbours by showing them God's love.*

Problem Division

The goal of this approach is to change our perspective by dividing the problem into parts and then recombining the parts in new ways. Thus we end up with a new way of looking at the problem. This can be helpful when we find ourselves locked into a particular perspective.

The problem division can be along the natural ways the original problem might split or it can be forced down completely arbitrary and artificial lines. To use a metaphor, the first is like breaking a

bar of chocolate into squares the other is like taking a knife to the bar and dividing it into triangles of different sizes which cut across one or more squares.

We will start with the same initial question as before: *"How can I release people to serve?"*

Then we will divide the problem into two to consider say: the **people** and the idea of **serving**. See the chart below.

The first main divisions are:

- **People and Serve**

- **People**
  Thinking about the people we need to divide them into two categories, they could be any categories, but we'll choose to consider: Who? And Heart?
    o First: **Who**? – Which people. This we divide again into two classes of people:
        ▪ **Everyone** in the church and;
        ▪ Those who are already **keen** to serve.
    o Second: **Heart** for service. This we divide into:
        ▪ Those who are already **willing** to serve
        ▪ Those who would like to but are **afraid**.

The second main division is:

    o **Serve**
      Thinking about serving we can break this idea down into two quite different categories: First, the need to **give time** to serve and Second, the idea of serving people who are **outside** the church
    o The need to **give time** to serve breaks down further into:
        ▪ Those who are **busy** and need to work out how to make time and;.
        ▪ Those who have time because they are **not working**, e.g stay-at-home mums, retired people etc.
    o Considering people who are **outside** the church this we breakdown into:
        ▪ The regulars who we know but who do not belong to the church implying that we work within our existing boundaries.
        ▪ The people we don't know yet, which implies the need to extend our boundaries.

Figure 1 Problem Division Example

```
                                                          ┌─────────────┐
                                                          │  Everyone   │
                                          ┌──────────┐    └─────────────┘
                                          │  Who?    │
                           ┌──────────┐   └──────────┘    ┌─────────────┐
                           │  People  │                   │  The Keen   │
                           └──────────┘                   └─────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────┐    ┌─────────────┐
                                          │Their Heart│   │ The Willing │
  ┌──────────────┐                        └──────────┘    └─────────────┘
  │ How can I release│                                     ┌─────────────┐
  │ people to serve? │                                     │  The Afraid │
  └──────────────┘                                         └─────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────┐    ┌─────────────┐
                                          │ Give Time│    │  The Busy   │
                           ┌──────────┐   └──────────┘    └─────────────┘
                           │  Serve   │                   ┌─────────────┐
                           └──────────┘                   │The Not Working│
                                          ┌──────────┐    └─────────────┘
                                          │ Outsiders│    ┌─────────────┐
                                          └──────────┘    │ The Regulars│
                                                          └─────────────┘
                                                          ┌─────────────┐
                                                          │ The Unkowns │
                                                          └─────────────┘
```
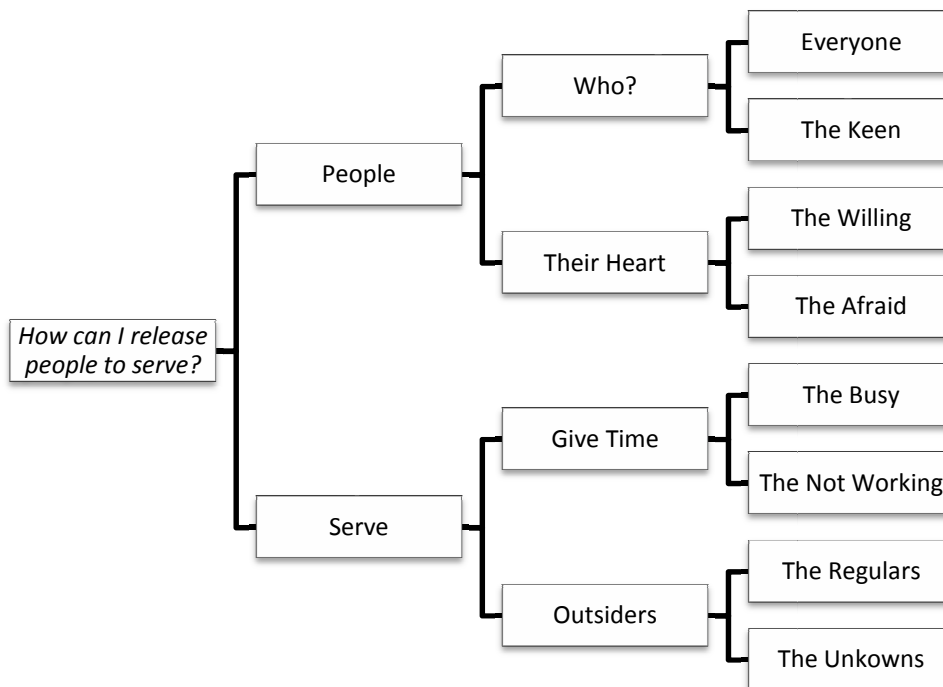
The division is arbitrary, there are many more ways that the problem could be divided but the discipline of this approach is to just choose two at each step. As with all these techniques it should be approached prayerfully. If your choices do not work you can always do it again making a different selection. (There are two other obvious options for the first division: release/people and release/serve)

Now we choose the points that we want to focus on: **The keen** people who are **afraid** to engage in service, particularly those who are otherwise **not working** and we will serve **the unknown** people beyond our existing boundaries.

Now we workout our challenge statement which becomes:

> *How can we release into service those of our people who are keen to serve and have time because they are not working, but are afraid to do so, that they might reach out to people we don't yet know?*

Notice how we started with the same basic question but we have ended up with quite different perspectives. It is quite possible that the restatement approach could have ended up with the same perspective as the problem division technique. But the fact it is that it didn't. This is because the two techniques we have used have forced us to think in different ways about the question at hand and so different trains of thought developed.

Problem Stretching

Problem stretching takes a different approach to the previous two techniques. They were about refining the question by providing focus. Problem stretching, as its name implies, is about opening up the problem statement while driving down to the root issue.

A frequent issue people have is stating a problem in terms of an anticipated solution. For instance "We need a new cooker" when the issue is that part of the cooker is not working and it needs repair. The way we state the problem will be affected by how we perceive the problem and all those patterns we make in our mind. Our minds run down their tracks and end up with a perspective which is limited in scope, may not be helpful and which is likely not to lead to a solution for the real problem.

The approach is quite simple. You start with your initial problem statement, whatever it is, and ask why? (It's just like being a child again.)

> You ask "Why do I want to do this?" Your answer is along the lines of "Because I want to….." You then repeat the process on this second question. Do this a few times until you end up at the root issue. You shouldn't need more than seven iterations.

> The result is that you have identified the root issue so you can really address it. The other answers you derived in the process give insight into some ways in which you can address the root issue.

Let's look at a simple example using the same starting question: *How can I release people to serve?*

Set out in the table in the left column we have the initial question and the issues that emerge and which are subsequently questioned. In the right hand column we have the "Why?" questions which probe the issues. The right hand column also includes the declaration of the root issues.

Table 2 Problem Stretching Example

Issue	Question and Observation
How can I release people to serve?	Why do I want to release people to serve?
Because as a pastor I am called to disciple Christians and help them to grow in their faith.	Two dimensions: • How do I disciple people? (a possible root issue) • A second question is: Why do I want to help people grow in their faith?
Because if people grow in their faith they will become more Christ like and they will be attractive to others	Why do I want people to be attractive to others?
Because then they will have the opportunity to share the gospel more effectively.	Why do you want them to share the gospel more effectively?
Because people will be saved.	Why do you want to see people saved?
Besides the fact that they need salvation our church will grow.	Why do I want our church to grow?
Because our church is small and if it doesn't grow it will die.	(Root issue) with a pertinent question: What is stopping our church from growing?

Note how this has arrived at the root concern: "What is stopping the church from growing?"

And we have added some intermediate issues which go some way to addressing the root issue, and when resolved will contribute to answering that root issue:

- How do I help our people grow in their faith?
- How do I help our people become more Christ like?
- How do I help our people become more attractive to those outside the church?
- How can we share the gospel more effectively?
- How can we help our church grow?

So we have both homed in on the root issues and at the same time widened the scope of the issue (stretched the problem) with other insights. These lead to questions which will contribute to addressing the root issues. The root issues can then be further examined or used as they are to initiate the generation of solutions.

Reflections

We have taken the same problem statement and looked at three different ways of changing our perspective concerning them, that we might be better able to resolve the issue. All three methods have given different results but each result is a way of answering the initial question.

At this point, given the nature of the examples, it's worth remembering that we are looking for God's perspective through his wisdom, insight and direction. So, it must be conducted with care and with prayer, listening to God.

- **Take a Moment**
    - Identify some problem, challenge or opportunity that you would like to address and write down your initial problem statement. (It doesn't have to be real issue)
    - Apply each of the following techniques to it:
        - Problem Restatement
        - Problem Division
        - Problem Stretching
    - What observations have you about the techniques?
    - What have you learned?

    (It doesn't have to be real issue but it would be interesting to take a real issue to see how you can begin to address it.)

Stimulating New Ideas

As we have discussed, when trying to identify creative solutions to problems we need to generate a different perspective, so we can think in new ways. It's rather like getting the creative juices flowing. It's what von Oech calls a "Whack on the Side of Head" and de Bono calls "provocation". We will look at some of the things we can do to stimulate our mind to look at things differently.

Engage in Play and Fun

As we noted earlier play and having fun are great stimulants of creativity. They get the creative juices flowing. They also stimulate the generation of intermediate impossibilities and cause others to spontaneously switch tracks to a different perspective.

Intermediate Impossibilities

Intermediate impossibilities are the wacky or silly suggestions. In themselves they could not possibly describe a solution, - hence the impossibility. Further examination of their essential ideas reveals potential paths to a solution which can be made practical. They are a step on the way – hence intermediate.

When there seems to be a road block in thinking, stimulating a playful, fun outlook that produces these wacky ideas is a very good thing. They allow you divert around the obstacle.

An organisation I knew was looking at how the reception area of their building worked. They were using a "Super Heroes" brainstorming technique. In this the participants adopted a super hero, e.g Batman, Superman, Spiderman and so on and threw out ideas in keeping with these characters.

The 60 year old receptionist had adopted Spiderman. Her Spiderman-like idea was that she would hang from the ceiling and when a visitor entered the reception she would swing across ceiling and drop down in front of them with a welcome. Plainly a silly, impossible idea.

However, when the idea was analysed it was seen that its essence was movement. The receptionist would go over to the visitor to greet them, not staying behind the counter waiting for the visitor to come over. This leads on to a different understanding of how the reception area would be designed and work. There would be an ordinary desk to one side, the receptionist would greet the visitor by name and take them to the seating area and provide a cup of coffee. The result being a much more welcoming first impression of the company.

The Spiderman notion was quite impossible but it was an intermediate step to a very interesting solution to improving the visitors' experience of the company. Hence intermediate impossibility.

Engaging the Brain

Some people tend to be logical analytical thinkers preferring the use of words, numbers and symbols. They need detail and are rational in that they draw conclusions from facts. They are very sequential in that their thinking flows from one thing to another.

At the other extreme some people might be described as visual thinkers, seeing things in relationship to each other and discerning whole patterns. They synthesise things combining them into a whole because they sense relationships between them. They are intuitive and make leaps of insight from partial or incomplete patterns and images.

Everyone sits somewhere in a spectrum between these extremes. Our minds are capable of both kinds of thought but tend to have a preference. This limits our thinking ability and the perspectives we can gain. It's as if we are not using the full power of our minds.

Paint the Problem

One approach to stimulate our least preferred kind of thinking is to have the problem solving team members make a picture that represents the problem under consideration and then describe it to the rest of the team. It's best to use thick markers or even better still, use finger paints. There is something about that tactile process that is more fun and more stimulating.

This may seem really wacky, even inappropriate in an organisational setting where people are doing paid work. However, painting stimulates visual thinking, explaining the painting stimulates logical and verbal thinking. So this approach has several benefits:

- It's fun and it stimulates creativity both of which stimulate the generation of new ideas.
- The whole process creates a different perspective and inspires different thinking.
- It stimulates both types of thinking and so engages more of the mind in the creative process.
- It enables the more visual and intuitive thinkers to stimulate their more logical, rational faculties helping gain a different perspective to the problem.
- It enables the more textual, logical, rational thinkers to stimulate their more visual and intuitive faculties and also gain a different perspective on the problem.

It's an excellent tool to use at the beginning of a creative thinking exercise or to reinvigorate the team when they start to get stale.

Object Forcing

Object forcing is a way of provoking a change in perspective. Effectively one forces a randomly selected object to be included in potential solutions. This compels one to think differently. If the inclusion of the object creates a logical inconsistency the result may be an intermediate impossibility.

It's important that the object be chosen at random. This allows it to have maximum impact as a provocation to different thinking. If it's not chosen randomly it is likely that it is chosen to fit in with the way that you think. So, choose an object at random from the room you are in or that you can see through the window. The visual impact of seeing a real object is also a stimulation to different perspectives. Alternatively, use a random list of objects, see **Appendix 1 Random List of Objects**.

The goal of object forcing is not to directly generate a solution, although that might happen, it is to provoke us to take a different perspective than we would normally take and so stimulate our creativity. Thus object forcing may be a good exercise if creative juices have dried up and progress has become blocked.

How does it work?

Let's look at a trivial example as an illustration.

The Problem: Too many paper clips are being used in the office. How can we reduce the number?

The Random Object: A crab

- The object can be used directly in the solution. For example. Glue the paper clip container to the crab's back so when it scurries away and hides, the paper clips cannot be found. This is a silly solution, perhaps an intermediate impossibility. So analyse the essence of what is going,

does it help find a solution. Put the paper clips where it's hard to get at them.

- Characteristics of the objects may inspire a solution – it may be metaphor. The hard shell of the crab speaks of security. It's hard to open. Place the paper clips in a secure, locked cupboard so people have to ask for them.

Don't stop at the first crazy solution but look for as many as you can find and have fun.

If you just needed to restart the creative juices flowing then maybe you have done enough by playing with object forcing.

If you were looking for intermediate impossibilities then review the crazy solutions that emerged. Does the essence of any of these point to a real solution?

Example

Here are some examples, not fully thought through, applying this to the "How can I release people to serve?" question:

- The crab's prey escapes from it pincers.

  If I as the pastor were the crab, perhaps I could "chase" people out into the community to serve on Sundays as an alternative form of worshiping God?

- The crab grabs things in its pincers and takes them back to its home.

  Perhaps our people could go out and bring people off the street to have a meal, a cup of coffee etc. at the church.

- Reversing that, the crab could pick things up and take them to people.

  Perhaps we could offer a shopping service to help people who cannot go out shopping easily.

- Crabs scurry sideways into the hiding places

  Perhaps it could take us to where people go to hide so that we could show them God's love?

Random Word

Injecting a random word into your thinking is another good provocation that forces your thinking onto a different track. It was devised by Edward de Bono. It simply involves finding a word at random. You can use a dictionary for instance or you could randomly choose a book from your book case, then randomly choose a page, a line and a word.

If the first word doesn't work then choose another random word. For instance one might find it difficult to work with the word "a" or "it" or a scientific, medical or technical word with which you

are unfamiliar. However, it does need to be random so that it doesn't reflect your thinking as then you will be unlikely to switch tracks.

Then it is a matter of word association. What does that random word make you think of in the context of your problem statement?

How does it work?

Here is worked example: The question is "How can I release people to serve?"

To prove the point I chose a book at random from a book case and then randomly selected a word from inside.

The Book was "Methods and Data Analysis for Cross-Cultural Research". I randomly chose: Page 126, Line 15 and word 7. If I recall I used a random number function in Excel to do this (but you can find other ways). The word I found was "district"

I then started idea association. The word "district" alone didn't help me but it led to other thoughts as you can see on the mind map.

"District" led to the ideas of:

- **Chosen or specific areas**
- **A region**
- **People** (from a different district) **new to the area**
- **Areas of responsibility**
- **Maps**

Then working with each of these in turn, in the context of my question the following trains of thought developed:

- **Chosen Area:**
  o We could serve a specific street.
  o We could identify our existing abilities to see how we can serve.
  o We can consider new capabilities that we need in which case training and coaching would be needed.

- **Region** – which led to the idea of culture (the culture of the people of that region)
  o Cultures have language. Could we start an English language school for immigrants or help them with conversational English?
  o Regions have cuisine. From our people:
    ▪ Could we start a café?
    ▪ Could we hold a banquet in a certain cuisine and invite folk along?
    ▪ Could we run a cooking competition?
  o People from different regions and cultures may feel isolated in our community, can we befriend them?

And so on.

Reflections

- **Take a Moment**
    - o Working with the problem statement you originally started with in the previous "Take a Moment" exercise, or one of the restatements that emerged from those exercises:
        - ▪ Apply *object forcing technique* to the problem statement using a random object
        - ▪ Apply the *random word technique* to the problem statement
    - o Compare the outcomes, what are your observations?

Synthesising New Ideas

We will now look at two tools for generating new ideas. They approach the question from looking at the things we already have. They can help us transform any object, service or process into something else. These can be used for solving specific problems but are perhaps more helpful when the need is to expand a product or services portfolio or work out how to apply existing products, services or processes to new situations.

The background image on the slide is an electricity distribution pylon or tower, but its viewed from underneath. It's a complexly different perspective than we normally get. Its recognisable and so it is another example of how our brains work with patterns.

SCAMPER

Scamper is an acronym for a number of tools which can be used to change one's perspective in order to transform existing objects, products, services or processes or find new ways of using them. SCAMPER is a Swiss Army Knife for the creative thinker it stands for:

Substitute some element of it

Combine something else with it

Adapt it to something or something to it

Magnify it or modify it in some way

Put it to a new use

Eliminate some part of it

Reverse it

Let's investigate these tools that enable you to think through how to change an existing object, service or process. There follows a worked example using a mind map to set out some SCAMPER possibilities. We will focus on cameras, only because we are all familiar with them and it was easy to think through the tools for this example.

Figure 2 SCAMPER Mind Map
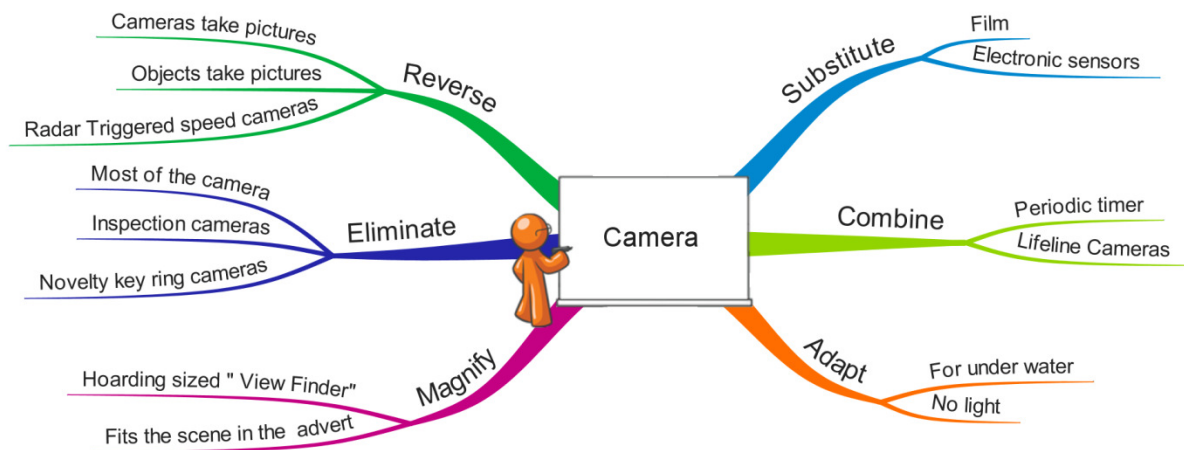
Substitute

Look at the entity you are considering and ask if there is anything about it that you can substitute for something else? For instance:

- Can the people who operate it be substituted?
- Can the rules be changed in any way?
- Can you exchange any element, component, material or ingredient for something else?

Considering the mind map example for Substitute. We saw this photography example a few years ago. Substitute electronic sensors for photographic film and the digital camera is born.

Ironically Polaroid and Kodak were pioneers of digital cameras, although they didn't see the trend and tried to hold on to film. Both corporations have significantly diminished as a result. Had they really been creative they could have been dominant in the market with first mover advantage. That is what Apple has in the smart phone and tablet markets.

The lesson is that just because you can come up with creative ideas you have to do something with them, especially if they are disruptive in nature.

Combine

What can you combine with the object, service or process to make something new? You might ask questions like:

- What other thing can we combine or merge with this and how can they be merged?
- What materials can we combine?
- How can it be packaged with something else?
- What ideas can be combined?
- Can we combine its purpose with some other purpose?

The example is combining a digital camera with a periodic timer and creating what is called a lifeline camera. It was developed in the UK to help people with medical problems that affected short term memory. The idea was that the person wore it all day and it took snap shots every 30 seconds to help them see what they had done that day. The product was discontinued. A similar but more

technical device is now available for police officers to wear to help record events and incidents in which they are involved. It continues to run all the time can hold a shift's worth of video if needed.

Adapt

How can you take what you have and adapt it for some new use or does something already exist that can be adapted to your need? Many things considered, most innovations are the adaptation of some idea or method to a new situation, frequently they are the ideas of others that trigger such insights. You might ask questions like:

- What is similar to this or what other idea does it suggest?
- Is there something that could be copied and changed to fit the need?
- Is there some idea that can be incorporated or adapted to fit the need?
- How can this be adapted to fit some other need or situation?
- What is there outside of my normal area of expertise that could be incorporated?

An example with a camera is: Can I adapt it to new uses such as underwater use or low light-no light situations. Besides making waterproof cameras some manufacturers provide watertight cases that enable ordinary cameras to be used underwater. It is also possible to adapt digital cameras to work with infrared because most sensors used are infrared sensitive and cameras have a filter to block infrared. Remove the filter and apply a visible light filter and the job is done.

Magnify

How can I make something actually bigger or seem bigger in some way?

Ask questions like:

- What thing or element could be made larger or magnified?
- What property can be extended e.g could more time make a difference? Can it be made stronger? Can its dimensions be made bigger? *For instance the case of a watch can make all the difference to the sense of quality. The standard movement in a plastic case will seem cheap but a weighty stainless steel case will make it seem a quality product.*
- Can it be delivered more often or given extra features?
- Can we add value to it?

An example in the mind map is to have an advertising hoarding sized view-finder which fits the scene behind the hoarding into the advert in some way. If the camera lens is facing the viewer perhaps it could be used to show them wearing the latest fashion item.

Two weeks after I wrote this the BBC reported a prototype of a digital changing booth which took a digital picture of a customer and showed fashion outfits superimposed on their image. The display was the size of a full length mirror.

Put to a New Use

How can I use this to do something different? The questions you might ask include:

- What else can be done with this?
- Are there new ways to use it?
- Can anything else be made from this?

The camera is a general product for taking pictures and can applied in all sorts of ways. It's a bit like pen. It's used to write but what can be written is limited only by the imagination of the users and the opportunities available.

Eliminate

Is there something that can be eliminated? Perhaps things can be eliminated from the object, service or process to change its nature.

Ask questions like:

- What if we made it smaller?
- What if we divided it into parts?
- How can we streamline it or make it more compact?
- What if we removed some functions?
- Which rules can be left out?
- What parts can be left out?

Considering a camera again.

Eliminate most of the camera, the view finder controls, battery life and removable memory card and the result is a very small camera perhaps an inspection camera or security camera. It is possible to get very small key ring cameras.

Reverse

Reversal is about looking at things from the opposite perspective to open up new ideas; switching tracks and changing perspectives. Sometimes it's about looking for the opposite of what you have and trying to imagine the opposites existing at the same time.

Ask questions like:

- What are the opposites to or negatives of what I have now? What does that mean?
- Can we turn something about this around, upside down, etc.? How would that affect how things worked?
- Can we reverse roles, what would happen?

The camera example: People use cameras to take pictures of objects, what if the object took the picture of itself? Sounds a bit like radar triggered speed cameras where the speed of the cars triggers the camera. Passive Infra-Red triggered Security cameras could also result from such a thought.

Ideas Box

The ideas box is another approach to synthesising ideas. It starts with the challenge. The various parameters of the challenge are identified and then mixed together to devise specific ideas. It can also be applied to any object, service or process.

Step 1 – Identify the challenge

The first need is to identify the challenge and then write it out.

In our case it's a slight extension of the theme we have already used: *"How can I release people to serve the community."*

Step 2 – Identify the parameters of the challenge

The parameters are the key ideas you can expand to define a specific version of the challenge. The test of whether an element is worth including is whether the challenge would still exist if it was not included. Don't create too many as the more you have the more difficult it becomes to see what's going on.

The parameters of this challenge are:

- Release
- People
- Serve
- Community

Set these out, each at the head of a column.

Step 3 – List the specific possibilities for each parameter.

Consider each parameter in turn and list in its column specific possibilities. Don't create too many as it's easier to see what's going on if doesn't get too complicated.

Let's look at some examples:

Release

Considering the parameter – "Release" we are really asking what could release mean in our context. E.g:

- Train (the people so they can have an appropriate capability)
- Apprentice (apprentice people coaching and mentoring them in a capability)
- Fund (so they can fulfil a particular ministry)
- Provide facilities (so they have somewhere to carry out their ministry)
- Provide a leader (so they can work out how to fulfil their ministry)
- Challenge (people so that they are motivated to act)
- Canvas work (find opportunities for their ministry)

People

We need to be specific about which people we mean:

- Youth
- Men
- Women
- Retired
- Unemployed
- Children
- Mums
- Dads
- The Sporty
- Etc. (the full list is quite long)

Serve

What do we mean by serve, what are the possibilities?

- Jobs (do jobs that people need doing)
- Interest clubs (organise these for people with common interests)
- Shopping (help those who need help with shopping)
- Drop-in centre (run these for people who would benefit)
- Toddlers (run a mother and toddler's club)
- Self-help club (for those that need such help)
- Homework club (for school children)
- Parenting classes (to help inexperienced, disadvantage parents)
- Mentoring (to support and develop people in some way)

Community

Identify the possible categories of people in the community who can be served: E.g

- Youth
- Teens/twenties
- Men
- Women
- Mums
- Retired
- Lonely
- Infirmed
- Singles
- Unemployed
- Lone parents
- Etc. (the full list is quite long)

Step 4 – Try out various combinations

Now see how items in each of the parameter categories might be combined to define a specific outcome, in this case a ministry.

Two examples:

- Provide a leader and apprentice men so they are equipped to mentor young people who are unemployed.
- Provide facilities and train young people so they can run homework clubs for children.

Plainly there a lot more possibilities to identify, each of which is a practical answer to the challenge as stated. Of course, the ideas must be evaluated for the reality of the need, their practicality and, not least, to be confirmed as being in line with God's leading.

Reflections

- **Take a Moment**
    - Choose some object, service or process with which you are familiar and apply each of the SCAMPER tools to it.
    - What have you learned from this exercise?

- **Take a Moment**
    - Working with the problem statement you originally started with in the earlier "Take a Moment" exercise, or one of the restatements that emerged from those exercises:
        - Apply the Ideas Box to it.
        - How do the outcomes differ from the earlier exercises?
        - What have you learned?

Collaborative Generation of New Ideas

All the tools we have looked at so far can be used by an individual or in a collaborative context. Frequently it may not possible to work collaboratively on the development of ideas but it has significant advantages and is strongly encouraged.

There are a number of collaborative approaches which are essentially variations on the process of brainstorming.

Advantages of collaborative approaches

The three most significant advantages are:

Diversity of ideas

One of the blockages to creative thinking we identified earlier was "It's not my area". The issue here is more to do with the scope of knowledge and experience that any individual has. This is inherently limited and as such limits our perspectives. Working collaboratively with others introduces the varying outlooks that they can bring to bear. This adds more different perspectives from which new ideas may emerge.

Provokes new thinking

Also the different thinking of one person can provoke another to gain a new perspective on the issue at hand. The unfamiliar thoughts of one help another to switch tracks and look at the challenge from a new perspective. A collaborative approach involving several people will also multiply the opportunities for new ideas to emerge.

Buy-in and Ownership

We have observed on several occasion throughout the **Growing the Servant Heart** programme that a key consequence of involving others in problem solving and decision making is that it increases the level of ownership and commitment to the outcome. Thus, when a team comes together to solve a problem they will have a greater sense of ownership than if the solution were simply passed down. Greater ownership and commitment is a key to enabling people to achieve their full potential, a goal of the Christ-centred servant leader.

Classic Brainstorming

In classic brainstorming a group of people are gathered together with the goal of offering ideas that will lead to a solution to the challenge. Going from person to person, as fast as possible each offers up an idea. These are recorded by the facilitator and analysed when the brainstorm is over. The brainstorm continues for 20 or 30 minutes.

The brainstorming group

The group should include members of the team who will need to bring the solution into being. Ideally, it will include people from outside the group with a different background and experience in order to bring about the benefits of diversity. Think carefully about who you choose to be part of the group.

Establish a facilitator

It's essential that a facilitator be appointed. It's their job to keep the brainstorm on track and help the group keep to the rules. It's not a good idea for the boss to be the facilitator because the boss/staff relationship normally stifles, or at least limits the group's creativity. It's good if they can be from outside the group entirely.

The facilitator has an orderly, mind set during the brainstorm seeking to collect the ideas they hear. It is difficult to contribute creatively whilst performing such a process. If the facilitator tries to engage the meeting they will tend to change its mind set from the creation of ideas to their analysis. Therefore, they should essentially remain in listening mode unless they need to steer the group to stick to the rules. They should simply record the ideas as they come and not try to collate them until the brainstorm is finished.

The boss stops being the boss

The presence of the boss in the session can stifle the creativity of the group. The members may be afraid of looking silly or being wrong if the boss is in the room. If they are in the room, the boss must give up their status and rank for the duration of the meeting and literally be just one of the group, complying with the essential brainstorming rules. This is right in line with the **Accepted Leadership** principles we discovered in **The Effective Practices of a Servant Leader**.

Warm up

It is often helpful to get the creative juices flowing by brainstorming a light hearted, "silly" topic. This can also enable the group to get used to the brainstorming rules. Alternatively the paint the problem technique, discussed earlier, could be used.

Alignment

The group needs to be aligned around the same problem statement. So initially some time needs to be spent looking at the problem statement to gain a shared and common understanding. It may be sufficient to declare the problem statement and spend a few minutes discussing it.

Alternatively, one of the techniques considered earlier can be used to explore and refine the problem statement.

Stick to the rules

For the effective operation of the brainstorm it is essential to stick to the rules:

Stay focussed on the topic

When firing off ideas and being stimulated by the ideas of others it is easy to get off topic. Group members need to be aware of where their minds are and keep on topic. The risk is solving the wrong problem. The facilitator must guide the group to stay on topic without making individuals feel criticised as this will cause them to stop contributing to the meeting.

Encourage wild and wacky ideas

As we have seen wild and wacky ideas are important on three counts:

- They contribute to an atmosphere which is inherently creative.
- They help others to switch tracks to a different perspective from which new ideas can emerge.
- They may in themselves be intermediate impossibilities which contains the essence of the solution being sought.

Consequently they should be encouraged and deliberately stimulated.

Defer judgement

The process of assessing and judging the worth and validity of ideas is a quite different process to that of creatively generating ideas. It has the power to crush the group's creativity causing them to switch off. Also if an individual's idea is judged negatively it almost inevitably causes them to switch off, especially if the judgement was made by, or in front of a person who is influential, like their boss.

It is, therefore, essential that all assessment of and comment on ideas is left until the collation and analysis stage, after the ideas brainstorm is finished.

Build on the ideas of others

Normally it is frowned upon to piggy back on another's ideas, not so in brainstorming. It is to be encouraged because the ideas of one person are intended to simulate the ideas of another. Each person will have a different perspective and so one person's idea may be improved by the ideas of another. The goal is for the group as a whole to generate the ideas which provide the solution. Therefore building on another's idea is encouraged in brainstorm.

Only one conversation at a time

Everyone needs to be focussed on the same task, throwing out ideas, one after the other. This is the only permitted "conversation" apart from the facilitator asking for an idea to be repeated so it can be recorded. If other conversations arise then judgement and analysis is likely to have begun. Judgement crushes creativity which kills the process.

Also a second conversation means that some people have dropped out of the creative process. This means they are neither generating ideas nor stimulating the ideas of others. The group needs to remain focused on generating ideas and contributing to the work of the group.

Collate and Assess after the brainstorm

Once the creative, idea generation phase is over the captured ideas can be clarified if required.

The group will then examine each idea and collate similar ideas seeking to merge them into a single idea. They will examine intermediate impossibilities for the essence of the idea and work out how that may be applied to a practical solution.

Once the collation stage is over each idea is assessed for viability and the best solution is chosen. The analysis may require additional work to be done to gather required information.

The selected idea is then implemented.

Super Heroes Brainstorm

The super heroes brainstorm works as just discussed but each group member adopts the character of a super hero, e.g Batman, Superman, Spiderman, The Hulk, Cat Woman, Wonder Woman and so on. Their ideas must employ their super heroes' capabilities. E.g Spiderman would swing from place to place, Superman has super hearing and so on.

This is a fun method and generates intermediate impossibilities.

Plussing

Plussing is a silent Brainstorming technique. It seeks to extend or enhance ideas.

Step 1 - Problem familiarisation

As with all brainstorming the group needs to get to know the problem to be addressed as previously discussed.

Step 2 - Idea generation

- Each group member has a sheet of paper on which they write down their idea.
- The paper is passed to the person on the left.
- Stimulated by the idea written on the paper they write down a new idea which is an extension or enhancement of the previous idea.
- The paper is passed left again and another idea which extends the previous one is written down.
- This process continues for a predetermined time, say 20 or 30 minutes.

Step 3 - Review and collation of ideas

The ideas are now reviewed and collated. This may be best done around a table with the idea sheets laid out. Duplicate ideas are deleted, similar ideas can be merged. Intermediate impossibilities are analysed for the essential idea they encapsulate. A final list of ideas is made.

Step 4 - Idea selection

The final ideas are then assessed for viability. This may require external work to gather more information.

Stickystorm

This is another silent brainstorming technique with the benefit of being self-documenting. The facilitator is able to participate in the idea generation phase.

Step 1 - Problem familiarisation

The group reviews the problem at hand as previously discussed.

Step 2- Idea generation

Each group member is given a block of coloured sticky notes.

They write each idea they have on a note and stick it on the wall. They are given marker pens with a medium to large tip to write with. This reduces the number of words that can be written on the note.

At any time they can look at what others have posted on the wall. This may stimulate new perspectives or enhancing another's idea.

This continues for a predetermined period, say 20 or 30 minutes.

Step 3 - Collation and development

Together the group reviews the ideas and collects together related ideas. These are posted on the wall under a title note. Duplicate ideas are removed and similar ideas can be merged.

Step 4 - Idea selection

The final ideas are then assessed for viability. This may require external work to gather more information.

De Bono's Thinking Hats

We learned about de Bono's thinking Hats in **Communications: A Core Competency for Servant Leaders.** It's a technique for helping the members of a meeting to keep in step with each other by recognising how people respond to ideas, problems and challenges. It allows the meeting participants to recognise 6 modes of thinking enabling them to work together collaboratively:

The white hat mode

This is about neutrally and objectively receiving information and grading its quality.

The red hat mode

This is when participants examine and express their feelings about the matter in hand. It's about one's emotional reaction and the justification of feelings is not required.

The black hat mode

This allows participants to think negatively about the matter in hand looking for obstacles and issues. This actually is a vital step and in reality is not a negative stage.

The yellow hat mode

The yellow hat mode gives participants permission to look optimistically at the matter looking for upsides and benefits.

The green hat mode

This is the creative mode is where new ideas and alternatives are sought.

The blue hat mode

This is the organising and administrative mode that plans and directs the flow of the meeting. It might only be used by the facilitator although when the group discusses the agenda and plan for the

meeting this will be in blue hat mode. Collective blue hat thinking also happens when summarising, overviewing matters and drawing conclusions.

The benefits of the hats

This structure is excellent for problem solving. It presents opportunity for problem analysis, creative thinking and idea assessment. The benefit of dividing the meeting into the various modes represented by the hats is that everyone knows what is going on and is thinking in the same way. Alignment of thinking modes minimises the conflict that can arise in meetings. This is, for instance, because it reduces the likelihood of someone in black hat mode (being negative and pessimistic) being confronted by someone in yellow hat mode (being positive and optimistic) and so on. If someone responds negatively during a yellow hat phase they can declare they are wearing their black hat. In other words they recognise they are being negative and all the participants understand this. The matter can then be noted by the meeting and dealt with latter.

It would be helpful to review the **Thinking Hats topic**. In the **Communications: A Core Competency for Servant Leaders lesson.** The link is just below the video.

Reflections

- **Take a Moment**
    - Identify a topic that you can use to practice brainstorming.
        - Identify the brainstorming group members you would like to be involved – remember the need for diversity and humour.
        - Plan a meeting with them and see what happens.

Refining New Ideas

All of the ideation approaches we have looked at generate a number of ideas. These ideas need to be assessed and those that will be realised must be chosen.

Using De Bono's thinking hats

De Bono's Thinking Hats is a good tool to use to structure the assessment meetings.

Stage 1 – blue hat

Agree the purpose and scope of the meeting and how the meeting will be conducted.

Where there are multiple ideas to consider, as might emerge from a brainstorm, the meeting might consider the ideas in turn using the following flow:

Stage 2 – white hat

Receive necessary information to enable ideas to be evaluated

Stage 3 – black hat

Assess the ideas for problems, risks and issues.

Stage 4 – yellow hat

Consider the upsides of the ideas looking for advantages and benefits.

Stage 5 – red hat

Receive emotional reaction to the ideas. (Just because an idea is logically sound, for instance, it doesn't mean that it will be acceptable. There may be a strong emotional issue which means the idea must be rejected.)

Stage 6 – green hat

This might consider how the idea can be adjusted, if possible, to address any negative issues that emerged in the black hat and red hat stages and take advantage of the positives that emerged in the yellow and red hat stages.

If the idea has been significantly modified it may be necessary to re-run stages 2 to 5.

Stage 7 – blue hat

Review the meeting's assessment and come to a conclusion. Will the idea be:

- Killed
- Investigated further
- Implemented

Also identify the next step for ideas which are not killed off.

Assessing Intermediate Impossibilities

Where intermediate impossibilities are being assessed it is yellow hat thinking that looks for the up side, the benefits of an idea. In this case what is the essence of the idea and how might it be applied to deliver the desired benefit.

So when assessing intermediate impossibilities an additional yellow hat stage may be required between stage 1 and stage 2 (stage 1a). In this stage the intermediate impossibility would be converted into a practical idea which would then be assessed through the subsequent steps.

Effectiveness

Using the hats in this way may seem to make the process seem long winded. This is not necessarily the case. Breaking the assessment down into these stages simply reflects the assessment process.

Meetings become extended and unproductive when different points of view are strongly held and trigger conflict.

For instance Fred is expressing strong views about an idea's benefits (yellow hat) and Joe has strong views about its disadvantages (black hat). Joe feels he must express these and does while Fred is expressing his view. In the meantime Harry has strong concerns because of potential, ethical issues (red hat) and he wades into the discussion.

This results in a confusion of yellow, black and red hat thinking which takes a long time, generates frustration and because each case is from a different perspective they are difficult if not impossible to reconcile. The outcome is confusion, frustration and conflict which make the meeting longer and more difficult than it needs be.

Separating out the modes of thinking enables participants to align their modes of thinking so they better understand where each other is coming from. They can also align their modes of working so they can work together more effectively.

Using the hats approach allows each participant to know they will have an opportunity to express their views and get a hearing. At the end all the views will be weighed up and a mutually agreeable conclusion can be reached. In short the process is streamlined.

It's because of this kind of effect that those who use the Thinking Hats approach regularly testify that meetings are easier, shorter and more productive when it's used.

Idea Assessment

Ideas would normally be assessed against a set of considerations appropriate for your situation. These will vary dependent upon the nature of the problem being addressed and the requirements of the organisation concerned.

The assessment criteria would cover areas such as:

- Measurability
- Need
- Cost
- Logistics
- Feasibility
- Relativity
- Spirituality and Morality

A set of typical assessment questions and considerations are set out bellow.

Measurable Criteria

Organisations ought to already have measurable criteria which are set according to their strategic and operational requirements such as:

- Must fit the strategic markets/ sectors/ countries in which we work.
- Must be available in the same financial year as the project starts.
- Must not require more than x% of our available income or people to implement.
- Must show a return better than some strategic value, e.g margin greater than x%, reduce operational costs by y%, be available to n% of the target sector, improve response times by m% and so on.

Assessment questions

There are other, more general questions that also affect the assessment outcome.

The questions may use qualitative words such as "better". The meaning of such qualitative words is context sensitive and so can only be properly defined in your specific situation. For instance a specific service which is not feasible for a commercial company could be highly feasible for a volunteer organisation because the cost structure would be quite different.

Here follows some suggested assessment questions. This list is not comprehensive and there will be other questions to add to the list which are relevant to your situation:

Need
- Is the need real?
- Does the idea actually address the need?
- Does it provide real rather than hoped for benefits?
- Are there better solutions already available?

Cost (money and resources)
- Do the benefits outweigh the costs?
- Is the necessary investment available? Can it be financed? How?
- Can the operational costs be covered (commercially will it generate enough profit)?
- Is the cost/benefit better than that of other possible projects and activities (important where resources are scarce)?
- Does it meet any strategic financial criteria?
- Are the risk management costs acceptable?

Logistics
- Are the resources and necessary skills really available to implement and deliver it?
- If it's within the scope of our skill set, have we actually got enough people/resources to make it happen when we want it to happen?
- Can it be achieved in an appropriate timescale?
- Can it really be achieved in the proposed timescale?
- Have the risks been identified and can they be managed or mitigated?
- Does it fit the organisation's vision, strategies, goals, processes and normal methods? If not can it or the organisation be appropriately modified?
- Can our normal processes cope with it?

Feasibility
- Is the idea sound?
- Is the solution complete? What's missing?
- Will it work in practice?
- What factors would block its implementation and can they be overcome?
- What are the weaknesses? Are they fatal? Can they be addressed?
- Is it too complex for us to implement or deliver?

Relativity
- Is the benefit big enough relative to other candidate projects?
- Why would we prefer to use our resources on this idea in preference to another?
- Would it still work if we shared the money and resources with another project and took longer to implement it?

Spirituality and morality
- Is it ethical?
- Is it in line with Biblical principles?

- Does it reflect the character of Christ?
- Will it glorify God?
- Does it advance the Kingdom of God?

Approval

Ideas which pass the assessment would normally be presented to the leadership team for approval and authorisation. This would include the allocation of appropriate funds and resources in return for an agreed capability delivered by a specific date.

This would normally require appropriate financial and project plans being prepared and presented.

Idea Implementation

A team would be established and programme of work of some kind will also be instigated to bring the idea to reality. Refer back to the **Leading Through Others** module to consider the issue of Teams. We won't look further at the work programme in **Growing the Servant Heart** but recommend that you refer to a Claybury International eBook "**Project Management for Christian Leaders"** which you can download free of charge via the following link http://christian-leadership.org/shop/#PMfCL

Conclusions

This is the end of the last lesson in the **Growing the Servant Heart** programme.

The goal of **Growing the Servant Heart** is to encourage you to live out Christ's servant heart as you seek to lead others as a Christ-centred servant leader. The essence of which is about enabling those you lead to achieve their full potential in his service and that they will also become more Christ-like in the process. It's about adopting and fostering a Kingdom culture which, as we have seen, is radically different to any earthly national culture. The one thing you can be sure of, therefore, is that you need to be different as leaders than you are now, in whatever country you may live.

The **Growing the Servant Heart** programme has sought to provide Biblical insight into what it means to lead people in Kingdom service and to introduce practical tools that will enable you to do this day-to-day.

May the Lord bless you as you seek to serve him.

Action Plan

Introduce creative thinking to your team and encourage them to use these techniques.

Consider the problems, challenges or opportunities that your team is seeking to address. Identify how you can use the creative thinking approaches we have discussed and lead your team in finding appropriate solutions using these techniques.

Review your notes from the Take a Moment exercises throughout the programme. Have your perspectives changed? How are you different as a leader?

Note down the top-ten things your have learned.

- What difference do they make to you as a leader?
- What difference do they make to those whom you lead?

Further Study

Review the Bibliography and if you have access to any of the books then take time to read more about creative thinking.

Next

Seek to apply what you have learned about creative thinking. Find someone that you respect and trust and can discuss this with, then schedule a review with them with the objective of discovering ways in which you can improve. Then set out your action plan and review that with them as you progress.

Now you have completed the programme take time to:

- Review the lessons, especially **Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom.**
- Prayerfully review your action plans and how you have developed as a Christ-centred servant leader.
- Identify your key development needs.
- Identify specific day-to-day leadership issues and work out how to address them.
- Prepare and follow up on your action plans.

Being a Christ-centred servant leader is a journey, therefore what's next is down to you.

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[3] MIchalko has researched and catalogued approaches that are used to enable people to think differently and thus creatively. Unfortunately he has not been spiritually discerning and has included one or two approaches that are not compatible with Biblical principles e.g. consulting a spirit guide. This does not negate the value of the other approaches that he has documented.

Appendix 1 Random List of Objects

	A	B	C	D
1	Fountain	Mug	Book	Blackbird
2	Tractor	Chair	Binoculars	Key
3	Plough	Bandage	Seagull	Plastic spoon
4	Skylight	Jet	Plastic knife	Scratch
5	Sugar bowl	Traffic lights	Boat	Policeman
6	Catapult	Nail	Chocolates	Toffee
7	Camera	Helicopter	Film	Keyboard
8	French fries	Pen	Wool	Cabbage
9	Socket	Jam jar	Blind	Frying pan
10	Shoes	Bulldozer	Grinder	Plug
11	Carriage	Egg	Gate	Spray paint
12	Butterfly net	Bottle	Door	Case
13	Straw	Microphone	Lilies	Blackboard
14	Apple	Vinegar	Box	Case
15	Glasses	Slippers	Screw	Double bass
16	Mark	Eel	Beans	Motor
17	Knitting	Swing	Crane	Road sign
18	Harness	Giraffe	Door	Sledge hammer
19	Buggy	Rope	Paint brush	Lock
20	Lamp	Business card	Coffee	Rocket
21	Railings	Knife	Fish	Vacuum Cleaner
22	Shirt	Hoist	Hammer	Tile
23	Tongs	Eye	Spot	Belt
24	Torch	Bucket	Corn	Ant Eater
25	Needles	Hedge	Birthday Card	Hinge
26	Roof	Ghost	Horse	Roses
27	Gorilla	Orange	Elephant	White board
28	Guitar	Drawer	Chisel	Couch
29	Lion	Nachos	Fork	Plastic fork
30	Train	Crab	Window	Door handle
31	Finger	Trousers	Toast	Football
32	Raincoat	Pedestrian	Car	Fishing Road