

Creative Problem Solving

Outsiders, Dissenters, Heroes and Rogues

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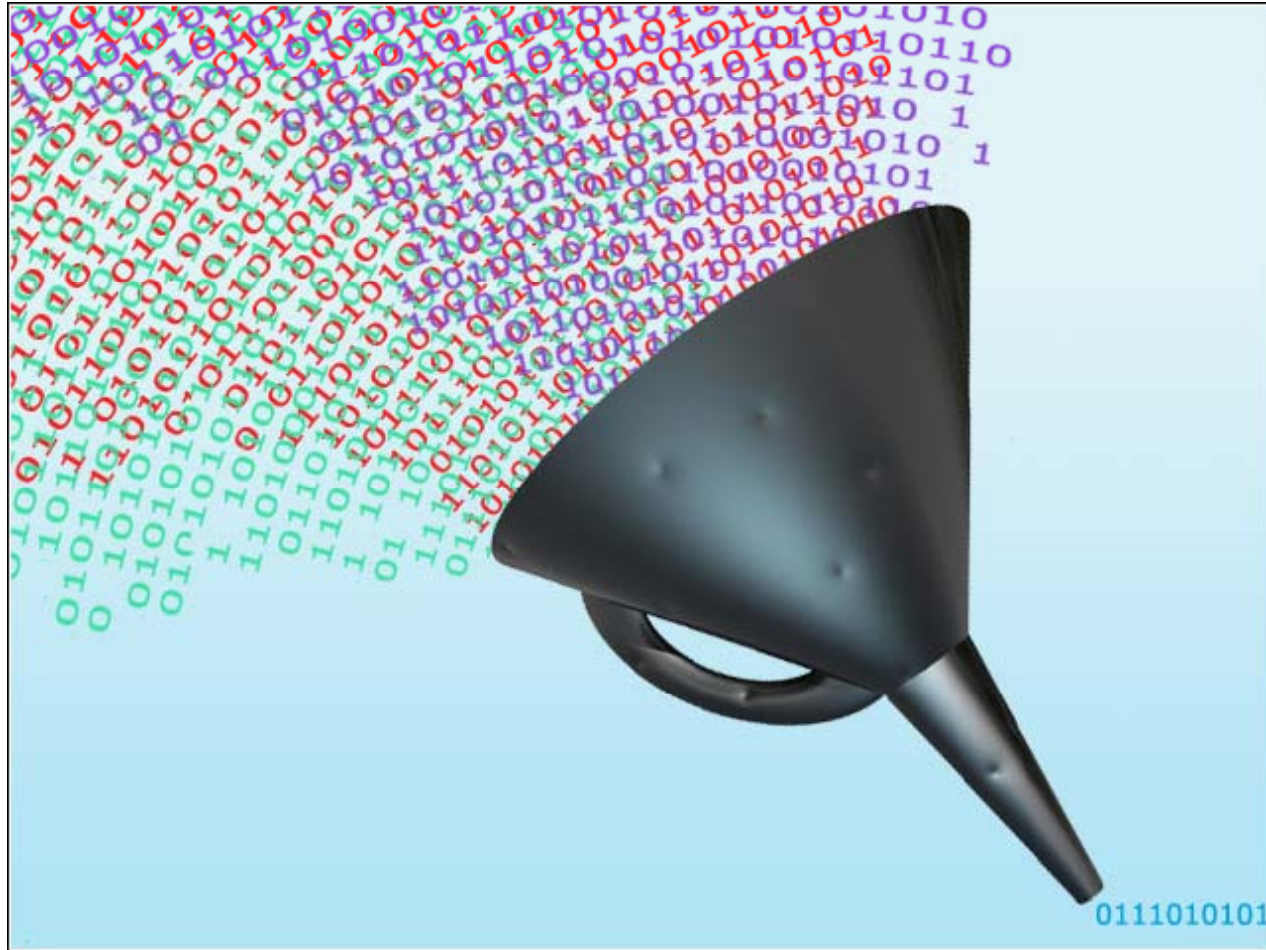
AASUPC Summer Council, Santa Fe July 2012

Panic?



Or is Necessity the Mother of invention?

An Impetus to Consolidation, Efficiencies, Savings



Efficiencies can be a Habit of Mind

- What do we know about creativity?
 - The relative (un)importance of IQ
 - Personality
 - Thinking styles
- We know more about what kills creativity
 - Success is one, creating

“habits of mind”

Can you think of a word?

___ **ANY**

Can you think of a word?

MANY

Can you think of a word?

MANY
__ENY

Can you think of a word?

MANY

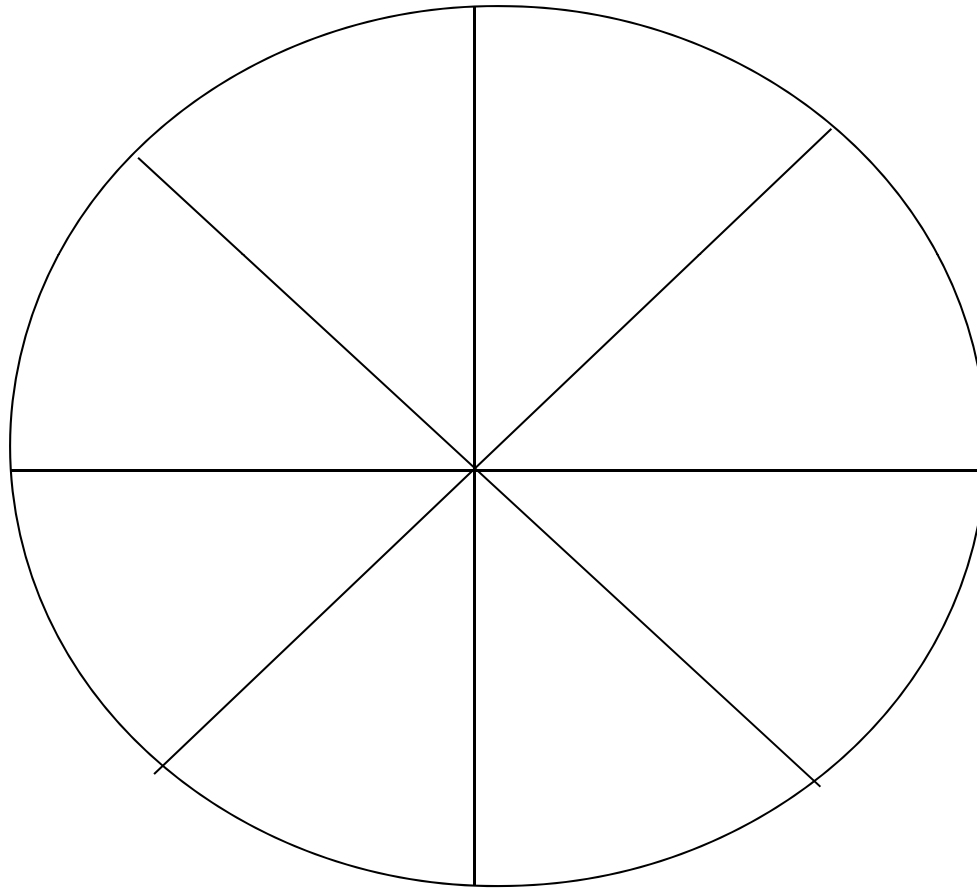
DENY

- Success breeds habits; we use the same ways over and over even when they are maladaptive.
 - Example: Air France crash

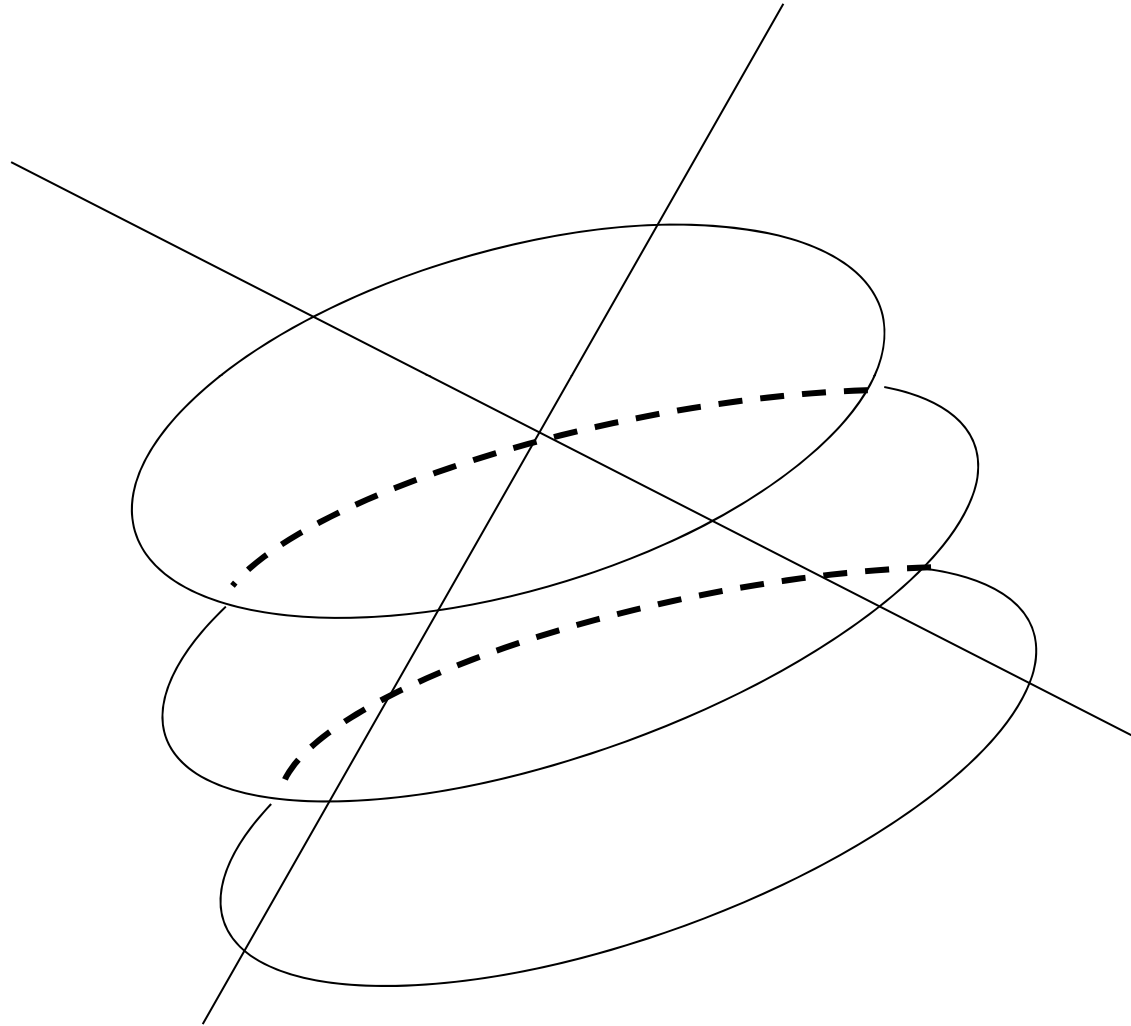
Assumptions

You have a cake and a knife. You can cut the cake 4 times in straight lines. What is the maximum number of pieces that you can cut the cake into?

Eight Times



Twelve Times



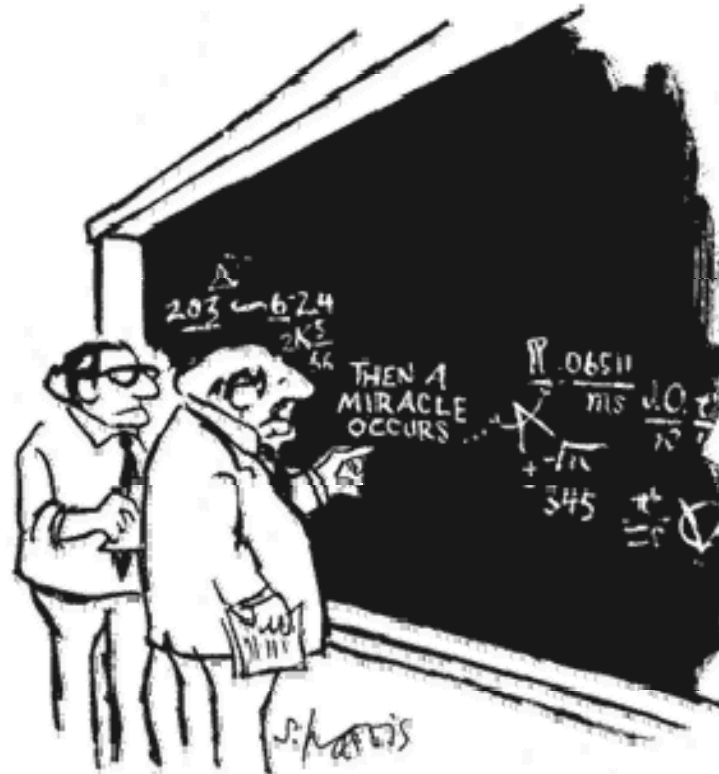
Caterpillar Birthday Cake...



Another habit of mind? A page from Business Schools



The problem, however,....



"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

Breaking the “habits of mind”

“Once we’re thrown off our habitual paths, we think all is lost, but it’s only here that the new and the good begins.” Leo Tolstoy

Be aware of assumptions

- the cake does not need to be round
- we do not need to conduct business the way we always have

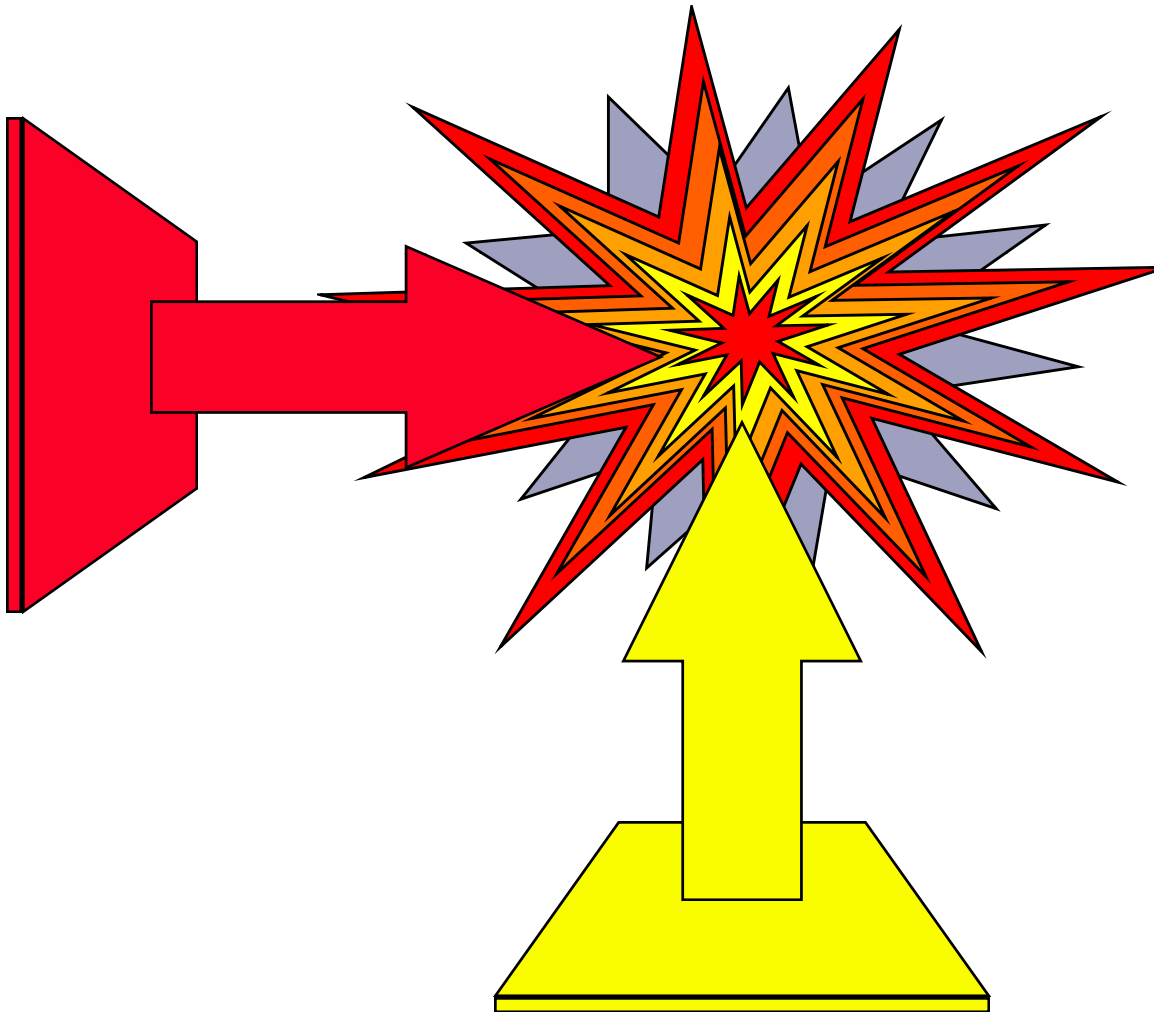
Be your own contrarian

- adopt the attitude of “what if”, “why not”—the questions of children
- consider all the ways in which the current thinking may be wrong
- Reassess the “rules”

**The beginning of thought is in disagreement –
not only with others but also with ourselves.**

Eric Hoffer

**A Combat Of Ideas is what Stimulates
Idea Generation**



An asset:

*Being —or being drawn to being-- an
“outsider”*

(and fiercely independent)

BETTER than being your own contrarian

- ***“learn to welcome and not fear the voices of dissent”*** Sen. Fulbright

- *'Gentlemen, I take it that we are all in complete agreement on the decision here. Then, I propose that we postpone further discussion to give ourselves time to develop disagreement and perhaps gain some understanding of what the decision is all about.'* Alfred Sloan (CEO General Motors 1923-56)
- *The people to fear are not those who disagree with you, but those who disagree with you and are too cowardly to let you know.'* Napoleon Bonaparte.

Without Dissent, Groups Can be Pernicious

Consensus, Groupthink, Fiascos





Majorities vs Minorities

(Nemeth and Goncalo 2011)



- **MAJORITIES** stimulate
- search for information supporting majority's position
- utilization of majority strategy
- following of majority; no novel detection
- reduced creativity; premature consensus

Better than techniques or awareness is

DISSENT



Majorities vs Minorities

(Nemeth and Goncalo, 2011)



- MINORITIES stimulate:
 - search for information on all sides
 - utilization of all strategies
 - detection of novel, correct solutions
 - more creativity; better group decision making
- MAJORITIES stimulate
 - search for information supporting majority
 - utilization of majority strategy
 - following of majority; no novel detection
 - reduced creativity; premature consensus

Irritation, Reduced Morale, Less Cohesion?



Techniques of “reducing conflict”

- Devils advocate, you suggest?
- (Doesn't work as does authentic dissent)
- Brainstorming
- (But change the rules)

A technique for creativity: Traditional Brainstorming **Rules**

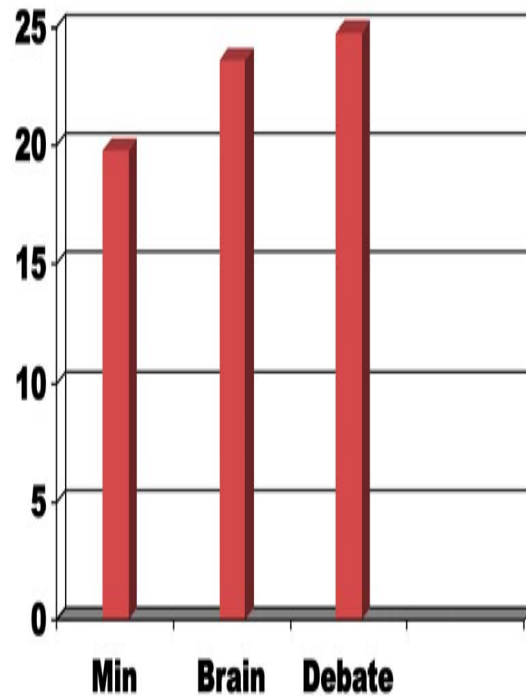
- 1. Quantity of ideas is encouraged
- 2. **Do NOT criticize the ideas of others**
- 3. Try to build on and elaborate the ideas of others.
- 4. Free wheeling is desirable



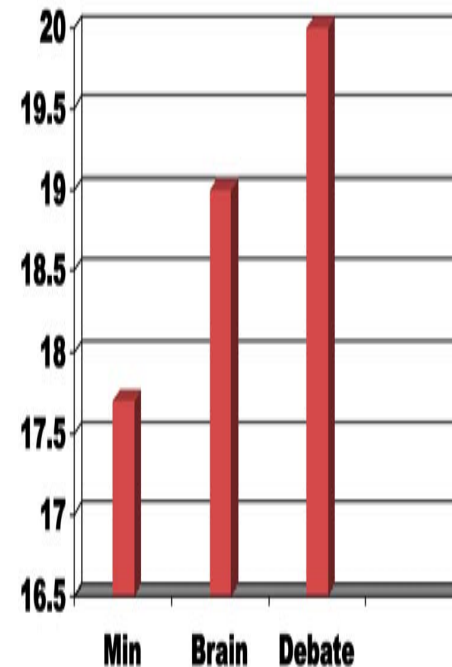
The “rule” that works best*

Encourage debate, even criticism

- US



- France



*Nemeth, Personnaz, Personnaz and Goncalo (2004)

Best of intentions

- You already
 - Invite opinions from diverse constituencies
 - Collate information from town halls, surveys and have a coordinating and/or executive committee
- Ask yourself
 - Who is consulted and how is information collected? Is there debate?
 - How diverse is the executive committee
 - How much debate occurs within committees

An (im)modest proposal:

invite the aliens into the executive committees



And debate

A parting thought



**“Have no fear of perfection,
you’ll never reach it”**

- Salvador Dali

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