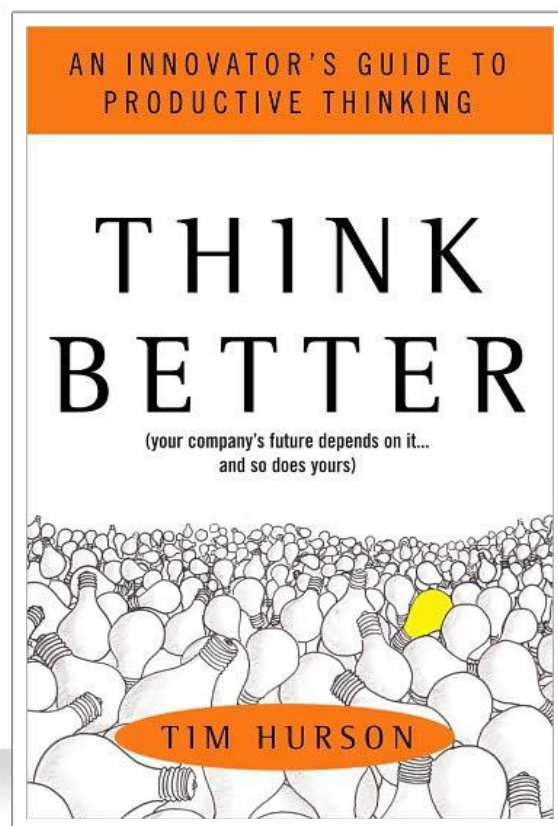


(Your Company's Future Depends
on it. . . and So Does Yours)

THINK BETTER



(Tim Hurson/McGraw-Hill/September 2007/300 Pages/\$25.95)



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THINK BETTER

(Your Company's Future Depends on it. . . and So Does Yours)

MAIN IDEA

Success in your personal, business or professional life is less a function of what you know than it is of how well you think. If you can enhance and upgrade your own productive thinking skills, you'll generate more options, be equipped to evaluate those options more rigorously and come up with better and more robust solutions. The better you become at productive thinking, the richer and fuller your life will become. Learn how to think better and you increase the value of all your activities.

Productive thinking blends together two very different and distinct thinking styles:

- Creative thinking to come up with new and better ideas – expansive breakthroughs from what has been used before.
- Critical thinking where you look at these various new ideas analytically and decide which are workable and which are not.

To create the future you want for yourself and your organization, you first need to be able to envisage and imagine it. Productive thinking is the best way to do that. Get up to speed with productive thinking and you can create the vibrant future you want.

“Everybody talks about creativity and innovation these days, but very few actually know how to put them into practice. I think you'll find that productive thinking is a game changer. It brings the skills to think better out of the closet and presents them in a way that makes them easy for anyone to grasp and use – so they can think better, work better, and do better in every aspect of their lives. The good news is productive thinking is a skill that anyone can learn and develop. Regardless of your starting point, you can learn to use your mind better. Productive thinking can help you think better, work better, and do better in every aspect of your life. The sooner you begin, the sooner you will benefit.”

– Tim Hurson

About of Author

TIM HURSON is a co-founder of Thinkx Intellectual Capital Inc., a consulting firm which delivers seminars and other training on productive thinking and innovation. A graduate of Oberlin College, Mr. Hurson is a faculty member and trustee of the Creative Education Foundation and a founding director of Facilitators Without Borders. Mr. Hurson has worked with corporate entities across the spectrum from small nonprofits to Fortune 500 companies helping them create successful innovation, marketing and new product initiatives.

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The six steps of
productive thinking

1

Ask: What's going on?

Step 1 is all about creating the right context for action. To fully explore a situation, ask probing questions:

- What exactly needs fixing here?
- What is the impact of this problem on our performance?
- What do we know already and who are the key players?
- What would an ideal solution to this problem look like?

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Before you start rushing to develop solutions for a problem, spend some up-front time making sure you accurately understand what the question really is. In many business settings, it is seductive to start generating solutions right away, but this can undermine your ability to be genuinely productive because you might end up generating a host of solutions for the wrong problem. You're far better off spending time at the outset to truly understand what's going on first.

To fully and comprehensively understand what's going on here, find the answers to five questions:

1. What's the itch? – Identify who feels uncomfortable with the status quo or who has the most to lose. Figure out what's wrong with the current situation. Make a long list of every possible itch you can think of. Try and look beneath the most obvious candidates and list every itch you can think of.
2. What's the impact? – For each itch, figure out what will happen if that itch goes unaddressed. Once you have a long list of itches and corresponding impacts, select those which are most significant to you or that you feel most strongly about. Then narrow your list down to one or two itches.
3. What do we already know about this? – For just your one or two main itches, write down everything you know about that itch. Then add in all the things you don't yet know but wonder about. Select from both lists a few things you either know or wonder about which are most important to a comprehensive understanding of that itch.
4. Who's already involved or needs to get involved in the future? – In addition to using your own perspective, look at that itch from the viewpoint of other stakeholders. Add in detail on how they would describe the itch and what they have riding on it.
5. What is our vision of the situation when this issue has been fully resolved? – Your "Target Future" is the place you want to get to when this itch has been fully resolved. Sit down and write a brief description of what your preferred future will look like when this issue has been fully resolved. Feel free to think expansively here. Perhaps you can finish this sentence: "It would be great if" State your Target Future in powerful words which energize you and motivate you to achieve it.

"Taking the time to understand what's really going on is a critically important part of productive thinking. There's nothing productive about solving the wrong problem."

– Tim Hurson

“You always start with a fantasy. Part of the fantasy technique is to visualize something as perfect. Then with the experiments you work back from the fantasy to reality, hacking away at the components.”

– Edwin Land, inventor of the Polaroid photographic system

Productive Thinking Case Study – Step #1

Fly-By-Night Airways is a regional airline trying to expand nationally. It is looking for practical ways it can differentiate itself from Southwest, JetBlue and all other carriers. Fly-By-Night has decided one way to do this is by using the middle seats on its Boeing 737 airplanes which have a 3x3 single-aisle seating configuration.

Fly-By-Night goes through the five questions this way:

1. What’s the itch?

The middle seat on the 737 is uncomfortable, a little claustrophobic and cramped. It can also be awkward when the window seat passenger climbs over you to go to the bathroom. There’s no leg room and less personal space in this seat even though it costs the same as a window or an aisle seat.

2. What’s the impact?

Fly-By-Night’s core customers are business travelers. It’s hard to do business in the middle seat and most passengers hate them. Business travelers feel like they’re losing time when they fly with Fly-By-Night.

3. What do we already know about this?

76% of our passengers are business travelers who don’t respond all that well to discounts or price breaks. They need to travel when they need to travel. We need to average 70% load factors to be profitable.

4. Who’s already involved or needs to get involved?

Our profitability is directly affected by our load factors, which in turn requires that we fill those middle seats. Business travelers need space to work but also need to feel fresh on landing. Our marketers would love to have something unique they could offer.

Our staff want minimal hassles or negative interactions with customers. Our shareholders want a return on their investment. Regulators want us to adhere to all applicable safety requirements.

5. What is our vision of the situation when this issue has been fully resolved?

It would be great if we could come up with something so compelling passengers actually ask to sit in our middle seats. If we could deliver this in some new and interesting way, it would blow our competition away.

“Discontent is the first step in the progress of a manor a nation.”

– Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900)

“Finding out what’s going on, discovering the real itch, setting the context for thinking, and establishing a compelling Target Future – all these things take time. Don’t shortchange this step. You may find yourself champing at the bit to get to solutions. But the purpose here is to start slow and steady in order to finish fast and strong.”

– Tim Hurson

“What’s Going On? provides the foundation on which you will build your entire thinking structure. Thus, it’s important to immerse yourself in it. In some cases, a robust What’s Going On? session, followed by a period of mental incubation (going for a walk, sleeping on it or simply turning your attention to other things for a while) may be all you need to solve your problem or come up with a brilliant new idea.”

– Tim Hurson

The six steps of productive thinking

2

Define what success is

In step 2, you’re starting to create an enticing future which pulls you towards a robust solution.

- Imagine what it would be like to live in your ideal future.
- Develop some specific, measurable success indicators.

Once you know what your ideal Target Future is, you then have to sit down and figure out how you’ll know when you’ve actually arrived. This is often harder than it sounds. The best way to do this is by painting a compelling picture of the future and harnessing that to pull you in the right direction.

Defining what success looks like involves two substeps:

1. Conduct an “Imagined Future” exercise – Take a blank piece of paper and write down what it would be like to resolve your itch and live in a future where this has been solved. Make your description vivid, graphic and alluring. Write down all the detail you can muster. Some possibilities:
 - Write your company’s annual report once your Target Future has been reached.
 - Write a press release announcing the launch of whatever will take you to your Target Future.
 - Review how you will describe addressing your itch in the past tense.
2. Use the DRIVE tool to list your success criteria – Take a blank sheet of paper and divide it into five columns headed like this:

D	R	I	V	E
Do	Restrict	Invest	Values	Essential Outcome

- In the first column, list all the things you want your solution to do in detail.

- In the second column, list all the things your solution must not do or in other words what you want to prevent happening.
- In the third column, list all of the resources you have available and are willing to invest in making your solution happen.
- In the fourth column, list all of your personal or organizational values which cannot be compromised in providing a solution.
- In the fifth and final column, list all of things that must happen for you to consider your solution a success.

“The outcome of this phase is Future Pull: a clear and compelling vision of a future in which the issue has been resolved, the Target Future has been achieved, and a set of observable Success Criteria have been stated that can be used to evaluate both potential solutions and outcomes.”

– Tim Hurson

Productive Thinking Case Study – Step #2

Fly-By-Night Airways defined the success of its middle-seat project in this way:

1. Conduct an “Imagined Future” exercise

Imagined Future
When business travelers think of flying, the first airline that comes to mind is Fly-By-Night because we offer the most sensational middle seats in the industry. Many of our repeat customers specify they want to fly the middle seat because they consider them the best seats on the plane. They are so compelling, in fact, we have documented examples of people who have flown our planes just for the fun of it and not because they had somewhere specific they had to get to. In short, our middle seats differentiate us because they <u>offer an unmatched experience.</u>

2. Use the DRIVE tool to list your success criteria

D	R	I	V	E
Do	Restrict	Invest	Values	Essential Outcome
<u>Strong brand different.</u> <u>Sales up</u> <u>Profit up</u> <u>Morale high</u> <u>Reports down</u> <u>Customer happy</u> <u>Repeat custom increased</u> <u>Happy on landing</u>	<u>No safety issues get raised</u> <u>Offering hard to copy</u> <u>No regulatory issues</u> <u>Load factor is not reduced</u> <u>Not price sensitive</u>	<u>Maintain a 70% load factor</u> <u>\$10,000 to get to proof of concept pilot project</u> <u>Approx. six months from approval to pilot project</u>	<u>Safety</u> <u>Sustainability</u> <u>Customer satisfact.</u> <u>Improved working condition for staff</u> <u>Become airline of choice</u> <u>Motto: "Your business is our business"</u>	<u>10-point bump in market share</u> <u>10% sales increase</u> <u>10% profit growth</u> <u>50% more requests for middle seat</u> <u>Move to 70%+ load factor</u>

“Future Pull is a vital part of achieving any goal, whether it’s the solution to a problem, the completion of a task, or getting a ball into a hoop. Future Pull is a way of making intentions tangible. Once you visualize your goal, ideas for achieving it appear virtually everywhere. As soon as you establish a concrete intention, you begin to notice all kinds of things in your world that relate to the intention. Ideas and opportunities seem to appear from nowhere, almost as if by magic. The power of Future Pull is that it stimulates the generation of relevant new ideas. It stimulates the unexpected connections that are the heart of productive and creative thinking.”

– Tim Hurson

The six steps of productive thinking

3

Pinpoint the real problem

Step 3 is to come up with your “catalytic question” – the essential question that must be answered to achieve your ideal or target future. To come up with a catalytic question:

- Diverge – generate a list of possible problem questions.
- Converge – choose a few salient and then one key question.

In this step, you're trying to come up with the right question to ask. This is very important. If you fail to do this, you might end up with a situation where you've generated a terrific answer to what ends up being just a small and inconsequential side-issue. If you can find the right question to ask, you're well on the way to identifying the best possible solution.

The best practical way to do this is to follow a two-step process:



1. Diverge – list as many problem questions as you can possibly generate. It's often helpful to list these in the format of:

- “How might I . . .”
- “How might we . . .”

Another way to dig deeper is to use the AIM tool:

A Advantages	List all of the potential advantages of your Target Future as questions.
I Impediments	List all of the likely impediments to achieving your Target Future.
M Maybes	List all of the added advantages from achieving your Target Future which do not relate to your original itch.

2. Converge – once you have a long list of potential questions, it's then time to use convergent or critical thinking to narrow down the list. One approach to doing this is to use C5:

- [C-1]** Cull – review your list and eliminate questions which are potential answers in disguise.
- [C-2]** Cluster – group together similar problem questions and get rid of duplication in thought.
- [C-3]** Combine – bring together into one numerous individual questions that are of the same theme.
- [C-4]** Clarify – look at each cluster and name the theme which is suggested, and eliminate any duplications.
- [C-5]** Choose – look at all the clusters as a whole and see if there are any obvious overarching themes which have cropped up again and again.

By generating lots of options and then narrowing your choices down to the one you consider most important, you have the best available opportunity to come up with a key question everything in your target Future hinges on. Ideally, this will be just one question but if you end up with a few, don't sweat it. You can figure out later on which of the questions gets to the heart of the matter and which are either repetitious or redundant.

Productive Thinking Case Study – Step #3

To generate some questions which might hit the mark, the Fly-by-Night team sat down and generated a list in answer to the question: “How might we . . .”

- Generate a new and additional revenue stream from people paying a premium to sit in the middle seat?
- Do something newsworthy which will also enable us to differentiate ourselves from the competition?
- Go about changing the mindset of our passengers about the virtues of the middle seat?
- Make sitting in the middle seat a sexy thing to do?
- Go about making the middle seat more comfortable and practical than the others?
- Find a partner who will help us do interesting things with the middle seats on our planes?
- Go about only attracting skinny passengers who will find the middle seat comfortable?
- Disguise the middle seat so it isn't seen as a middle seat by our passengers?
- Enhance customer loyalty by doing something with the middle seat that our customers positively rave about?
- Persuade airplane manufacturers not to build planes with middle seats?
- Provide a middle seat experience so engaging people are motivated to bid for the middle seat when making a reservation?

After going through the C5 approach, the executive management team at Fly-by-Night decided their catalytic question was:

How might we change the mindset of our passengers about Fly-by-Night's middle seats?

“The most serious mistakes are not being made as a result of wrong answers. The truly dangerous thing is asking the wrong question.”

– Peter Drucker

“A prudent question is one-half of wisdom.”

– Francis Bacon

“It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question.”

– Eugene Ionesco, playwright

“The silly question is the first intimation of some totally new development.”

– Alfred North Whitehead

“What's the question? is a pivotal step in the Productive Thinking Model. The outcome of this step is a clear articulation of the essential problems or opportunities in the form of one or more Catalytic Questions that invite ideas for solution. In organizations, there is a strong tendency in this step to go back to the tried and true, the safe, the questions that don't rock the boat too much. You should avoid this tendency. Find a question that sends chills down your spine. There's a good chance it will lead to a solution that warms your heart.”

– Tim Hurson

The six steps of
productive thinking

4

List all potential solutions

Step 4 is where you generate lots and lots of potential solutions – the more the better. Don't worry at this stage about the quality of your ideas, just come up with lots.

- Diverge – list all rational, irrational and composite ideas.
- Converge – identify the 3 - 5 best sounding options.

Generating potential answers to your catalytic question is what most people think of as brainstorming. Again, as in step 3, a combination of divergent or creative thinking is used to come up as many ideas as possible and then convergent or critical thinking is harnessed to identify which ideas have potential and which are too impractical.



1. Diverge – List as many ways of answering the catalytic question as you can. It doesn't matter if each idea is practical, wacky, controversial, impossible, disrespectful, unaffordable, ignorant or whatever. Write down as many solution alternatives as possible. Look at the question from every feasible perspective. How would you solve it if you had unlimited time, unlimited money, superpowers, certainty of success and on and on. Look for interesting combinations and go down any side roads which are suggested.

2. Converge – once you've generated your list, start panning for gold. Ideally here you want to come up between three and six ideas which have the potential to be developed into useful solutions. Again, this is an application where the C5 tool works well:

- Cull out any ideas which are really wild.
- Cluster and group similar ideas.
- Combine different clusters into one more robust concept.
- Clarify and label each cluster with a descriptive statement.
- Choose underlying principles common to your clusters.

The last step is then to select which ideas you will work on and develop further. How many you choose is up to you, but between three and six is a reasonable working number at this stage. Make certain you pick ideas which are original and different rather than those which are more tried and true. If the ideas you pick don't pan out, you can always come back to your list and select some other candidates in the future.

"I make more mistakes than anyone else I know. And, sooner or later, I patent most of them."

– Thomas Edison, inventor

"You write down the problem. You think very hard. Then you write down the answer."

– Richard Feynman, Nobel physicist

“The best way to have good ideas is to have lots of ideas, and then choose the best ones.”

– Linus Pauling

“The problem is never how to get new, innovative thoughts into your mind, but how to get old ones out. Every mind is a building filled with archaic furniture. Clean out a corner of your mind and creativity will instantly fill it.”

– Dee Hock, founder of VISA

Productive Thinking Case Study – Step #4

Fly-by-Night’s catalytic question is: “How might we change the mindset of our passengers about Fly-by-Night’s middle seats?” After a group brainstorming session, some 70 or 80 potential answers were generated. These ideas covered the entire spectrum and included:

- Pay people to sit in the middle seat
- Only allow attractive passengers to sit there
- Make the middle seat wider than the others
- Market the middle seat as a networking opportunity
- Eliminate the middle seat altogether
- Give middle seat passengers extra airline miles
- Change the seat direction so it stands out
- Redesign as a standing area
- Make every seat a middle seat
- Have a lottery ticket attached to every middle seat
- Offer better meals and free drinks to middle seat passengers
- Board and disembark middle seat passengers first
- Make the middle seat more comfortable and luxurious
- Have a floor hatch for middle seat passengers
- Price the middle seat cheaper
- Allow middle seat passengers to bring their spouse for free
- Provide access to play center for kids or work center
- Make the middle seat kid-friendly
- Have swivelling middle seats
- Make the middle seat higher than those at each side ... and loads more ideas of all shapes and sizes and in varying degrees of feasibility, practicality and workability.

From this list, three clusters were generated:

1. Enhance the image of the middle seat
 - Make sitting in the middle seat fashionable or sexy
 - Make the middle seat person feel special
 - Make the middle seat cheaper
2. Reconfigure for more space
 - Remove every other middle seat
 - Turn middle seat so it faces backwards
 - Put middle seat on rails so it can slide back and forward
3. Offer premium service for the middle seat
 - Provide first-class service to the middle seat passengers
 - Add premium service on the ground

- Provide access to work centers
- Position the middle seat as a flying office

From those clusters, three embryonic ideas were selected as the most promising for Fly-by-Night:

- Turn middle seat so it faces backwards
- Add premium service on the ground
- Position the middle seat as a flying office

The six steps of productive thinking

5

Polish the best solution

Step 5 involves taking the best embryonic idea you've come up with and polishing it into a robust workable solution.

- Identify which idea meets the success criteria you've set.
- Take that idea and improve, refine it and stress-test it.

Polishing the best possible solution involves two substeps:

1. Develop an evaluation screen – a grid which allows you to look at whether each raw idea meets a criteria for success, fails that criteria or is neutral in its impact. Glancing at the grid as a whole will give you a sense of how each idea stacks up against other alternatives. Perhaps one idea will stand out as meeting all your success criteria while others appear weaker, or it may be there are a couple of ideas which are in the running. The evaluation screen gives a good big picture perspective. Choose whichever idea looks the strongest as the best candidate to work with at present.
2. Use the POWER tool – to try and transform your embryonic idea into a robust and practical solution. POWER is an acronym for:

P	O	W	E	R
Positives	Objection	What else?	Enhance - ments	Remedy
What's good about this idea and why might it do well?	What are the flaws? Why might this idea fail?	What else might be in the idea but has not yet been said?	How might the positives be beefed up and built on?	How can problem be sorted out?

Work through your idea using the POWER tool and see whether it gradually evolves and strengthens into something good. You'll need to do this several times before you'll really have a feel for whether your idea is robust enough to work out in practice. Use of the POWER tool can also be helpful in building a group consensus for the best way to move forward in the future as an organization.

"Ideas are not solutions; they are the raw material of solutions."

– Arthur VanGundy

"The desired outcome of Polish the Best Solution is a clear articulation of one or more Powered-Up solutions that meet Success Criteria, are stress-tested to reveal potential weaknesses, create value for stakeholders, and have a good chance of resolving the itch and achieving the Target Future."

– Tim Hurson

"The primary power of POWER is its ability to transform run-of-the-mill or even weak ideas into robust solutions. If you begin to use it, I think you'll see it has many other applications as well, from defining the key issues in conflict situations to problem analysis to team building."

– Tim Hurson

Productive Thinking Case Study – Step #5

Fly-by-Night developed its evaluation screen for the three most promising ideas in this way:

	Differentiates	No safety issues	Hard to copy
Turn middle seat so it faces backwards	✓	x	–
Add premium service on the ground	–	✓	x
Position the middle seat as a flying office	✓	–	✓

Key:

“✓” The idea meets the given criterion.

“✗” The idea does not meet the criterion.

“–” The idea neither meets nor does not meet the criterion.

On the basis of this evaluation screen, the third idea was selected for further development. Using the POWER tool and creative thinking for the option of “Positioning the middle seat as a flying office” looked something like this:

P	O	W	E	R
Positives	Objection	What else?	Enhancements	Remedy
Elevates status of <u>middle seat</u> Great <u>differentiation</u> Hard to copy if we <u>do it first</u> Passenger can stay in touch with home office while <u>flying</u>	Could still be <u>copied</u> Not really enough room to fit this in our <u>planes</u> Anyone who is working would have <u>privacy concerns</u> This product will affect our <u>business class</u>	Test market for <u>demand</u> Develop a flying office <u>club?</u> Add premium ground service as part of <u>product?</u> Partner with others to add more <u>value?</u>	Partner with office furniture <u>maker?</u> Trade-mark a name for our flying office <u>class</u> Offer tools, especially <u>connectivity</u> Allow office to convert into a <u>sleeper chair</u>	Brand and integrate into our <u>image</u> Remove alternate <u>seats</u> Create blinders and special <u>lighting</u> Enhance our business class and make it a <u>premium offering</u>

The six steps of
productive thinking

6

Align your resources

Step 6 is where you prepare for action by aligning all of your organizational resources behind the best available solution.

- List all the action steps required to make it happen.
- Identify all your allies and all your potential obstacle people.
- Make someone accountable for each action step required.
- Put the steps in their optimal order or sequence.
- Identify any additional resources which must be acquired.
- Observe and record the outcome of each step.

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To have a plan is important but the world is never static. Things change. Therefore, “plan” should be a verb rather than a noun. To plan is to prepare, to understand all of the background factors and to immerse yourself in every nuance so when marketplace conditions change, you’re able to respond appropriately and still keep moving towards your specified Target Future.

Broadly speaking, there are two substeps you can use in this the last step in the productive thinking process:

1. Develop your timeline or calendar – a week-by-week chart which sets out which tasks need to be done at what time in order for everything to come together. For a big project, try writing tasks on sticky notes and slapping them on a wall which has divisions for weeks or months. Take those sticky notes and position them where they need to be in the overall sequence. Change them from one month or week to the next as changes arise. Developing what you might call your own “Great Wall of Time” in this manner will allow everyone to understand how the various elements need to come together at the end. Enhance this by writing on each note who will be responsible to see this task gets done.
2. Use the EFFECT tool – which is a resource checklist. EFFECT stands for:
 - Energy – high or low commitment requirement.
 - Funds – what financial resources are needed.
 - Free time – how much time you’ll need to complete tasks.
 - Expertise – who has the know-how you must apply.
 - Conditions – what milestones must be reached.
 - Things – what materials or resources are needed.

For each sticky note on your project’s Great Wall of Time, ask the EFFECT questions for that task. Have a very clear idea what resources you’ll need, how you’ll find the time and what other preconditions have to be met before you can complete the designated task. It’s also useful if you write on each slip the observable outcomes you are expecting to materialize once that task has been completed satisfactorily. You want evidence the project is moving forward rather than stalling or getting sidetracked. This will help you know and understand when each task has been completed.

It's also helpful if you identify early on who are most likely to be your Assistors (people who will help you execute your plan) or your Resistors (those who will for one reason or another hinder your plan). If you're forewarned, you can step up your efforts to encourage the Assistors and neutralize the impact of your Resistors.

"In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."

– Dwight D. Eisenhower

Productive Thinking Case Study – Step #6

Fly-By-Night Airlines developed this descriptive statement of their new business initiative to better utilize the middle seat on their 737 airplanes:

What we see ourselves doing is:

Fly-by-Night will create a special class in our airplanes to be called "Flying Office by Fly-by-Night". We will remove every other middle seat and place the remaining middle seats on sliders so they can be adjusted by customers. We will also provide customers using the Flying Office with productivity tools, special lighting, privacy barriers and enhanced ground services. We will create a new club to be called the "Fly-by-Night Flying Office Club". In order not to cannibalize our current business class, we will enhance and update our business class so it becomes even more of a premium offering. We will pilot test the Flying Office concept in selected markets and then decide whether or not to expand this on the basis of the results achieved.

To take this concept from interesting idea to marketable offering, Fly-by-Night set up a war room at its corporate headquarters. One wall was designated as its Great Wall of Time. The staff then did these things:

1. A set of sticky notes were made up with one required action step per note.
2. The notes were placed on the wall and then checked for completeness in the first pass.
3. One person was assigned responsibility for each action step, as well as potential Assistors and Resistors for each.
4. All the sticky notes were then set out in a logical week-by-week sequence on the wall.
5. For each action step, the owner was required to carry out his or her own EFFECT analysis. Additional action steps were created during this analysis relating to the acquisition of resources which would be required for subsequent action steps.
6. Observable outcomes were created and noted for each action step.
7. An action book was then created which contained all the information set out on the Great Wall of Time.

8. Executive responsibility for the project was then assigned to a senior business leader by Fly-by-Night's management.

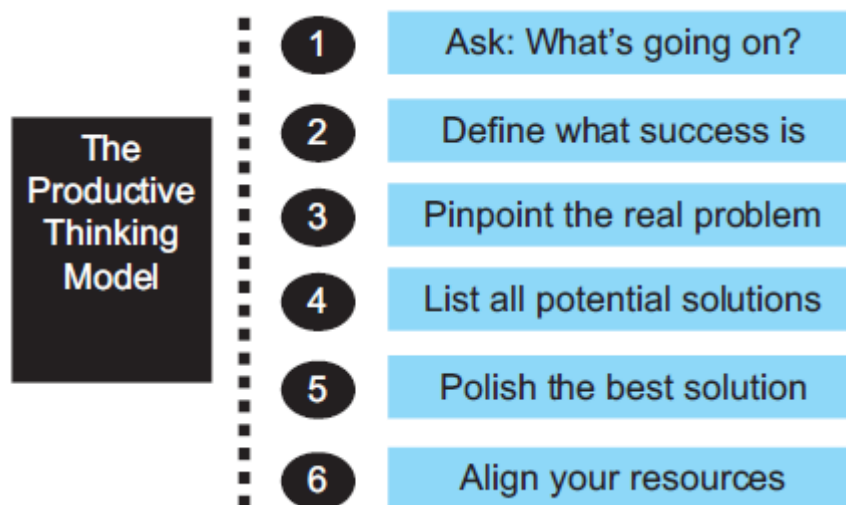
“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”

– Sun Tzu

“Remember that your plan is not the same thing as your project. You will undoubtedly encounter stumbling blocks and changes along the way. The value of your work lies not in the plan itself but in the planning you’ve put into it.”

– Tim Hurson

In conclusion, be aware of what the productive thinking process is and is not.



“The Productive Thinking Model is not a perfect description of the only way to solve a problem. But it is a useful way. I have seen it work countless times and in dozens of domains. I have seen it used to solve business problems, clarify sales situations, develop technical solutions, suggest new products, create marketing campaigns, reduce conflicts, map strategies, enhance relationships, reduce frustrations, orient careers, and resolve personal dilemmas. I have seen it help people in finance, manufacturing, engineering, marketing, politics, government, science, medicine and family life. Occasionally, I’ve seen it fail. Still, it’s just a model. It provides direction and guidance, but it is neither absolute nor immutable. I encourage you to use it flexibly, adapting it to your own needs, circumstances and thinking styles.”

– Tim Hurson

To tell when it’s unlikely the Productive Thinking Model will work, use the I3 model:

[I-1] Influence – Do you personally or does the group you belong to have influence over the issue you want to plan? If responding to the challenge is outside your area of authority, it probably won’t be worth spending too much time or effort on the Productive Thinking Model.

[I-2] Importance – Is the issue at hand something that is important to you personally or your group? If not, you probably won’t be prepared to spend time, effort and money analyzing what to do anyway. You may be better waiting for circumstances to

change or for minor issues to sort themselves out.

[I-3] Imagination – Generally speaking, the Productive Thinking Model works best in situations where an innovative solution is required. If the issue can be resolved with an off-the-shelf solution, it will be easier and cheaper for you to go with that solution than to custom design your own. Not every situation needs an innovative solution.

If you can answer yes to all of the I3 questions, then it's likely productive thinking is for you. If your answer to any of these questions is no, then you either don't need to use the model at all or you should work to restate things in a different way which will meet the I3 criteria.

Also bear in mind there are three other situations where it's unlikely productive thinking will end up proving to be helpful:

1. When you're in an urgent situation which needs an obvious quick fix rather than a brand-new productive solution.
2. When it's just not worth spending the effort to try and go from good to great. In those situations, it's not worth the time and resources required. You're better off pushing on with what's already available.
3. When you don't have the influence needed to make new projects happen within your organization using the productive thinking process will be impractical. Even if the situation is crying out for an innovative solution, if you don't have the access to resources or the power to push things through, you'd be better off doing something else.

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

– Albert Einstein, scientist

"All models are wrong: some are useful."

– George Box, author

"Imagination is the beginning of creation: you imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine, and at last you create what you will."

– George Bernard Shaw, author

"Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is the probable reason why so few engage in it."

– Henry Ford

"Creativity is not an escape from disciplined thinking. It is an escape with disciplined thinking."

– Jerry Hirschberg

"The Productive Thinking Model builds on our natural three-step problem-solving process – perceive a problem, pick a solution, do something – and transforms it into a comprehensive, repeatable six-step framework for thinking better. Simply put, productive thinking is a way to come up with better answers. It allows you to sidestep the knee-jerk reaction and come up with creative, useful and effective solutions. With productive thinking, you can train yourself to generate more options, better options, more of the time in almost any situation. Productive thinking provides you with more

time and more tools to perceive the problem accurately, pick the best solution from a broad range of possibilities, and do something in a way that offers the greatest chance of achieving success.”

– Tim Hurson

“Productive thinking separates creative thinking and critical thinking. It is a process of suspending judgment to generate long lists of ideas and then returning to those lists to make choices by judging the ideas against preestablished success criteria: making lists and making choices. The productive thinking dynamic is the ongoing alternation between creative thinking and critical thinking. With the right attitude, the right approach, and the right skills, we can all think better!”

– Tim Hurson

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