

Creative Problem Solving

The Learner's Model



1. Clarify
Identify the challenge



2. Ideate
Generate ideas



3. Develop
Bring ideas to life



4. Implement
Giving ideas legs



CLARIFY

Start here when you need to pinpoint the right challenge to pursue.

Explore the vision

Begin with a goal in mind. (If you're not quite clear on the goal, *diverge* a list of "wish statements" that begin with "I wish..." or "It would be great if..." and *converge* by choosing the best one.)

Gather data

What's a brief summary of your situation? Write the facts, history, key players, big opportunities, current intuitions and criteria for success.

Formulate the challenge

Reflect on your goal and the data around it. Now *diverge* on possible way to approach it. Remember to phrase challenges as questions and don't stop at one. Begin each question on the list with a starter like,

"How to..." "How might..." "In what ways might..." "What might be all the..."

Write 10 possible questions and *converge* on the one that frames the challenge best.



IDEATE

Start here when you have a clearly defined challenge and you need ideas for it.

Explore ideas

Now that you've got the right question to set up your idea generation, *diverge* on all the possibilities, ideas and options that might work. Start with the obvious and push yourself to go beyond. Bump your brain out of its comfort zone and consider novel approaches. Look at ridiculous, even outlandish options. It just might help you branch down a rich new path of possibilities.

Idea shop

Once you've got a big pool of ideas to choose from, *converge* on your favorites. See if they cluster naturally into groupings and get ready to carry them forward into the next step.

Guidelines

When you DIVERGE...

Defer judgment
Strive for quantity
Seek wild, unusual ideas
Build on other ideas

When you CONVERGE...

Be affirmative
Be deliberate
Check objectives
Consider novelty

Wild card: INCUBATION



DEVELOP

Start here when you want to turn promising ideas into workable solutions.

Formulate solutions

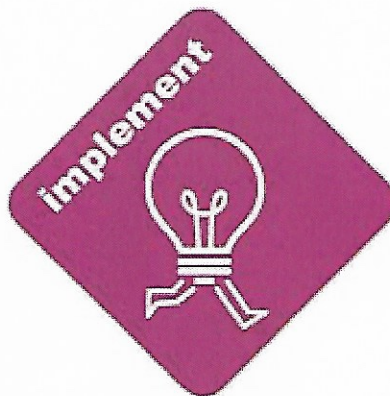
Review your top ideas and synthesize them into a “story” of what you’re planning to do next. Write it like a journal entry, giving rich details, clear deadlines and measurable results. Begin with the statement starter...

“What I see myself doing is...”

POINT evaluation

Now it’s time to evaluate and improve your solution. One useful tool for that is POINT, which stands for: Pluses, Opportunities, Issues, and New thinking. So first, consider what are your solution’s pluses? What opportunities might open up if you implemented this idea? What issues might need to be addressed before the idea is ready for prime time? Can you bring some new thinking to overcome those challenges (which you’ve cleverly phrased as questions)? Based on your POINT evaluation, what might you add to your paragraph to improve your solution?

“To strengthen my solution...”



IMPLEMENT

Start here when you need buy-in from others and an action plan to follow.

Explore acceptance

Diverge on a list of who or what might assist you with your solution. Write down how you might enlist their help. Make a list of who or what might resist and how you might overcome that resistance. *Converge* on your critical area of focus.

Formulate a plan

Diverge on a complete “to do” list of everything that needs to happen to make your solution a success. Then *converge* on the key steps and sort them into short-term, mid-term and long-term activities. Commit to do something in the next 24 hours!

Assess the situation

Throughout the process try to stay aware of what sort of thinking needs to happen next. Sometimes you’ll assess the situation, gather data and move forward to the next step—sometimes backwards. Your goal is to become increasingly aware of what type of thinking will take you to your goal.

Process Overview



STEP	CLARIFY	IDEATE	DEVELOP	IMPLEMENT
Start here when...	You want to create, invent, solve or improve something	You need novel, useful ideas to address your challenge.	You want to turn promising ideas into workable solutions.	You want to get buy in and implement your solution
Statement starters	I wish... It would be great if... How to... How might.... In what ways might... What might be all the...		What I see myself doing is...	
Mindset	Clarifiers are strategic thinkers. They identify gaps. They see opportunities. They value facts, questioning and information.	Ideators are imaginative thinkers. They get the big picture. They mix and match ideas to create new possibilities.	Developers are evaluative thinkers. They select, improve and refine ideas to get the solution "just right" for its context.	Implementers are tactical thinkers. They learn by testing and prototyping to see what works.
Tools	Check for ownership, motivation and need for imagination Gather data questions Phrase challenges as questions	Brainstorming Brainwriting Forced connections Visual connections Excursions	POINT Evaluation matrix Card sort Targeting	Assisters/resisters Action plan Debriefing questions
Outcome	A statement of the goal, wish or challenge A well-defined challenge question	One or more ideas that will solve the challenge	Well developed, detailed and improved solutions	A plan for taking action