

Thinking Managers

Edward de Bono of www.thinkingmanagers.com examines the necessity of knowing when you need a new idea and judging if your new idea provides a better answer to the one you already have.

The need for new ideas

Ideas usually come about from the way of thinking we develop in maths lessons. We look at the information to hand, then use our judgement and analysis to find the solution. As in a maths exercise, we are presented with the data and work out the right answer.

But these methods and believing there is only one correct answer are totally wrong and very dangerous. There are in fact many possible answers, and finding one answer should not prevent you from finding more or tempt you into believing it must be the best solution.

It is important for people in business to open up to the possibility that the first 'right' answer they come up with might not be the best. Then they can concentrate on these three questions:

- ➔ How can you find better solutions?
- ➔ How will you know when these newer solutions are better than your first one?
- ➔ When should you stop looking for solutions?



To demonstrate, let's take an implemented answer to a modern problem and look for a better alternative...

In London motorists must pay a congestion charge to enter a designated zone in the centre of the city. As a traffic reduction scheme, this could certainly be more effective, since the charge is currently only £5, which motorists become accustomed to paying.

But here's an alternative answer: everyone living within a certain radius of London could be given a free permit to enter the congestion zone. However, to drive into the zone they would have to display four permits. Therefore, commuters could arrange to share a car with three friends. Alternatively, they could buy or hire a permit from someone else. So those receiving money for their permits would be getting paid to leave their cars at home. This scheme could reduce traffic by three-quarters.

At the very least, this represents a possibility. But it is difficult to understand the value of possibility when the whole of education and thinking practice is directed towards truth and certainty. Nevertheless, progress is dependent on possibility.

About the author:

Edward de Bono is the world's leading authority in the field of creative thinking and the teaching of thinking as a skill.