

# Using Creative Thinking for Process Improvements

Amanda Stevens, Student Support Manager, SSS

## Aims & Objectives



To explore ideas to generate creative thinking within the Frontline Services Team with the objective of identifying process improvements.

To ensure that our processes are:

- Student focussed to improve student experience
- Streamlined to reduce administrative time
- Paper light to reduce costs of producing & processing paper mountains
- Fit for purpose

## Review of Creative Thinking Literature

“Innovation is not the product of logical thought, although the result is tied to logical structure. Innovation is looking with fresh (creative) eyes at old ways of doing and improving them (Albert Einstein)

“More and more creativity is coming to be valued as the essential ingredient in change and progress” (Edward De Bono)

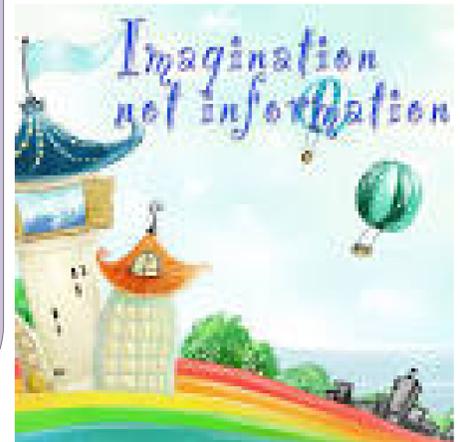
“The role of a creative leader is not to have all the ideas; it's to create a culture where everyone can have ideas and feel that they're valued” (Ken Robinson)

“Creative & Lateral Thinking is an increasingly useful way of freeing up ‘blocked’ minds “ (Paul Sloane)

“The best way to get a good idea is to get a lot of ideas” (Linus Pauling)



## Literature Review



## Steps to Change



A ‘process improvement’ session using lateral thinking puzzles to ‘free minds’ and generate creative thinking approaches to identifying ways of improving existing process was trialled with small sub-groups (2-3) in my team .

The steps adopted in the session were as follows:

1. **Identify our current processes** – map the existing process and highlight areas controlled by our team and those areas controlled elsewhere (other areas of the organisation or externally, e.g., Government)
2. **Ask questions:**
  - does the current process meet the stake holder needs (students/ team members/ business partners/legislative requirements)?
  - Do we (individually and/or as a team) add value to the process?
  - Can the process be made to work better (even just by 1%)?
3. **Explore creative ways of thinking** with introduction of ‘Lateral Thinking’ puzzles
4. **Revisit the mapped process** and ask whether, we can look at the issues in a different way
5. **Identify changes for improvements**
6. **Improvements actioned within realistic timescales**



## Identified Benefits

- We were able to identify and map specific processes that had not previously been considered as a ‘process’ – just something that happened.
- We were able to review different ideas for improving the process
- Staff left the session with actions to take forwards to improve one process

## Team Engagement

- Participants in the first session found the approach helpful in considering different ways of finding potential solutions for the processes being considered
- Was less successful with participants in second session where the processes focussed on were ‘owned’ by other areas of BU.

## Unintended Outcomes

- Gave participants an opportunity to express frustrations around processes that did not work well
- Highlighted questions to be raised with other stakeholder groups where ownership of process was outside of the team’s control

## Lessons Learned

- The approach worked well when considering individual processes for improvement
- Best/quickest results were achieved when the process considered for improvement was ‘owned’ by the team
- More could be achieved in the sessions if specific processes were identified in advance as requiring improvement
- Include broader range of stakeholders in the session to expand the number of creative solutions proposed.

## Measures of Success

- Processes were identified for improvement
- Ownership taken by individuals for leading on the process improvement implementation
- Team members are able to apply creative thinking processes to other problem areas

## Outcomes

