



CreACTIVE Management

Business Managers' Training Tools for Youth Leaders

Silke Weigang, Editorial

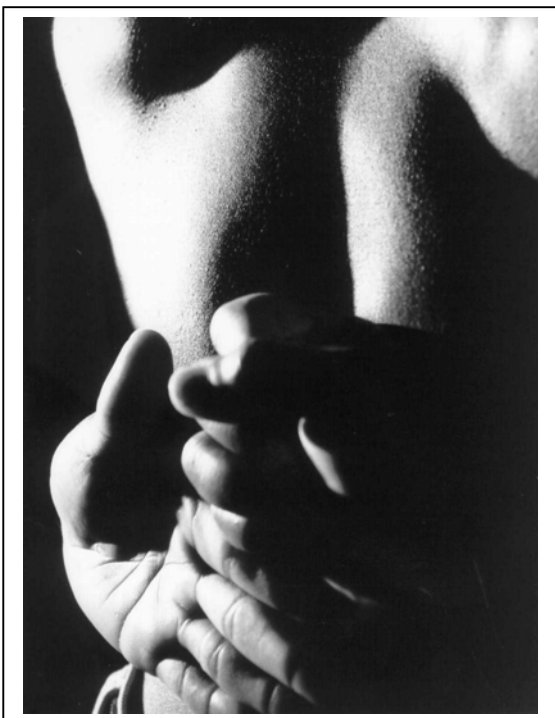
The team leader spent the entire two hour meeting on future activities of the group by giving an endless monologue... We have all been in situations like this. Sometimes, as participants, we have been disappointed, thinking that we had just wasted our time... Sometimes, as moderators ourselves, we became demotivated, because we wanted to do better and ended up all the same... But what are the *creative and active* techniques, that motivate participants to come up with individual ideas, that evolve into group agreements? This issue of *YouthWorks* examines some methods and training tools, that bring creativity into group management.

Being creative does not copy or apply a blueprint. "To create" means to bring into existence, give rise to something new and different. This is even more than "to innovate", which seeks to bring in novelties, to make changes of something already existing. The strength of creativity lies in inventing and applying case-specific solutions to everyday problems. How do we get there?

Through a simple act of connecting two different backgrounds in a new way in order to solve a problem: something you never thought of having anything to do with each other beforehand.

Take an example from a developmental perspective: Several young people in Dominica were suffering from being jobless for a long time. One night as so many before, they were discussing their future until they fell asleep. With the first shimmer of light, one of the guys woke up. When he was observing, how the sun rose and brought light into the dark of their

hut, suddenly an idea came to his mind. Excitedly he shook up



"To create" means to bring into existence, give rise to something new and different! © photo: S. Weigang

his friends. "Let's produce candles!", he shouted towards them. They didn't understand a word, sleepy as they were. "Sure", he explained, "when I suddenly saw the light of the sun brightening the dark, I was thinking of all our dark nights at home. Without electricity to light a single bulb in our huts, what we need is candles!"

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The rising sun was just a picture, an analogy to a burning candle bringing light into a house –and the whole idea finally brought new light into the personal lives of these young people. They all came from an agricultural background, nobody new how to produce candles. They had a long way to go, but by making use of creative ideas, they finally found a market niche and a solution to their employment problem. (see our section “*Ideas that Worked*”)

The Dominica example shows, that we can all be creative.

It does not depend on higher education, a person’s IQ, social status or cultural background. Of course, creative ideas are often expressed in different ways, because creativity forms an important part of our cultural identity. We should always acknowledge the richness of this variety, when we talk about creative problem solving on a global scale, or within a local community, a big company or a small group. (see page 5 & UNESCO’s webpage).

Creativity is not a talent, it is a way of acting, of operating.

Then, how can we learn to be creative? “Giggle, all you want”, is how the businessman John Cleese once put it, to underline the importance of humour in a creative process. “Besides the playfulness of humour, you need space, time and confidence!” Space and time to be by yourself, to calm down, and let your thoughts pass by. And then additional time to play with the problem as long as you can. “Tolerate the discomfort you feel, when you do not find a solution at once!” You will need confidence in yourself. Don’t be purpose-oriented at that point or in a hurry to be decisive! Invite humour! Be patient, the solution will come!

To encourage creativity, experiment with these problem solving techniques:

Brainstorming

This is a process of letting your thoughts go, wherever they want to.... you freely associate whatever comes spontaneously to your mind, even when it does not seem to have anything to do with your first idea. You start “in the middle of a spider net” with a keyword or a key sentence, then through “freewheeling” elaborate the whole net around it. This can become a very rich pool of images and a proactive “starter” in *group discussions*.



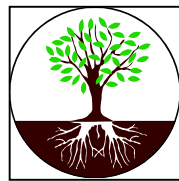
In a more elaborated form inspiration can be encouraged by giving people a tool first, to play with individually; like paper and pencil, wood and knives, or even clay / (plastic) modelling material. In such an exercise we asked trainers this rather abstract question: “how do you feel about small group work?” After three minutes of modelling the trainers described small group work by talking about thunder storms & sunshine, or small and big people representing different personalities... Instead of a theoretical summary of pros and cons, participants expressed their feelings and attitudes, shared experiences. The way of putting the question, asking for the “how”, directly encouraged this personal involvement! Remember, not to criticise or evaluate ideas during the brainstorming session – this will intimidate participants and stifle their creativity... for more see:

<http://www.cmu.edu/fms/crjtl/brainstorm.html>

<http://203.97.16.149/units/brain.htm>

<http://www.mindtools.com/brainstm.html>

What is mind-mapping?



It’s a simple technique, based on brainstorming, but more structured! Take a central word or concept, around which you associate 5 to 10 main ideas that relate to this word. To each of these key-ideas you can relate again 5 to 10 new main ideas.

Imagine, you plan an excursion in your group and want to be sure not to forget anything! Apart from the food, to have music available, for example, you should remember to get your guitar... don’t you have to replace that torn string with a new one, etc... – It works like following a tree, the central word is the trunk (“excursion”), all further concepts will become roots or branches (“food, guitar”) with smaller ones and leaves (“string”) related to each main branch...

This method urges you, to write down all your ideas first and then to group, to organize them. Because it also urges you to reduce every big concept to a single keyword, mind-mapping is a powerful tool for *note taking*, *creative & report writing*, or for *group discussions*. In the end you have a systematic overview, that can be seen visually and easily memorized. For more, visit: <http://world.std.com/~emagic/mindmap.html>

Headstand-Technique

It works like brainstorming, only “up-side-down”. You formulate the problem into its opposite and launch a brainstorming process. For each idea that comes up, you then search for an opposite solution. Thereby you link your solutions back to the original problem.



For example: “How can I get group members to actively participate?” *Opposite formulation*: “How can I prevent people from actively participating?” *Brainstorming answers*: by talking all the time myself, criticizing their answers, etc. *Opposite Solution*: give space for others to talk, encourage comments, etc. - It can be a very useful tool to break through thinking blocks and to look at the problem “from all sides”.

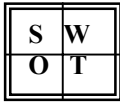
“Visual Synectics”



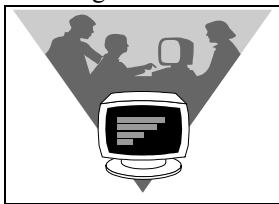
This method derives from the Greek word “*synechein*”, which means “to connect/ to combine”. Whereas *brainstorming* is based on *associations*, (*visual synectics* is working with *analogy* and *metaphor*. Take pictures, chosen by chance, *unconnected* to the topic of the problem. To discuss “how to improve group members communication skills and ability to resolve conflicts”, you might first want to look at photos which show a football game, fishermen at work, young people in a disco, or a thunderstorm, etc. While looking at these pictures – on a flip-chart, a wall, a table... a small group of different people interchange in an informal and often humorous way their ideas. *Steps*: 1.) Formulate the problem, 2.) Explain the problem and reword it in the sense of “what can I do to help realizing...”, 3.) Give some spontaneous solutions, 4.) Look at the variety of pictures/ photos/ drawings, which have been chosen randomly. 5.) Each group member describes, what she/he sees, feels, thinks about the picture, hereby following a brainstorming process, 6.) The group starts developing ideas and solutions by *connecting* the descriptions, which serve as stimulation, with the genuine problem. If you

feel stuck, switch over to the next picture...., 7.) Critically look at the solutions within the group and go on developing them further. --- This technique is popular for initiating very original, unusual solutions! Going back to our example, this could mean to create a comfortable atmosphere, to get a "football referee" as nutreal arbitrator; or to introduce so called "critical ships", meaning to develop a correspondence of critics, write to each other about different ways of approaching problems, etc.

What is SWOT analysis and how is it used?



SWOT stands for: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Traps or Threats. The SWOT methodology is not so much a creative tool in itself, but can be very helpful in a strategic planning process. When seeking to implement agreed solutions of a brainstorming session or concerning complex organization analysis, SWOT may be appropriate. Such



Youth & Cyberspace
Helpful addresses on CREATIVITY IN TRAINING

YouthWorks does not guarantee the reliability of any services offered by contacts on the Internet.

Organization	Internet-Address URL / E-Mail-Address #
AFIDES & University of Montréal, Canada. International Colloquium "Diriger en période de transformation" (French)	http://www.afides.qc.ca # afides@grics.qc.ca http://www.afides.qc.ca/COLLOQUES/MTL/perrenoud.html
Center for Studies in Creativity. Buffalo State College, USA	http://www.snybuf.edu/creative/cschrp.html
Cirque du Monde. Youth intervention program...uses circus arts as an alternative form of education for underprivileged teenagers (English, French)	http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/coulisse/index.html
Department of Education, Government of Catalonia, Spain. educational resources, international projects (English, Spanish, Portuguese)	http://www.xtec.es # info@pie.xtec.es
Harvard Negotiating Project - Notes on a New Approach to Negotiating	http://www.cionline.com/sljohn/Harvard.html
La Universidad de las Américas, Mexico. <i>especially:</i> CreAcción: (Spanish)	# csii@mail.pue.udlap.mx http://gente.pue.udlap.mx/~raluni/creado.html
Ministry of National Education, Bogotá, Colombia. Gabriel García Márquez: "A manual to be child"...science, education and development... (Spanish)	www.icfes.gov.co/mineducacion/man-nino.html
Multiple Intelligences for Adult Literacy & Adult Education	http://literacy.net.org/diversity/homenew.html
New Horizons for Learning. Network... expanded vision of learning.	http://www.newhorizons.org/index.html
ITESM Campus, Juárez, Mexico. Training Techniques (Spanish)	http://car.cdj.itesm.mx/manualte.html
Technology Education New Zealand	http://203.97.16.149/units/index.htm
The Psychology of Creativity and Innovation. Training Course.	http://www.derby.ac.uk/schools/business/create.html
UNESCO. About Creativity, the UNESCO Web Prize and the Stockholm Conference on Protection of Diversity and Creativity against Uniformisation.	http://www.unesco.org/culture/creata.htm ; cii.webmaster@unesco.org ; http://www.unesco.org/webworld/webprize/ ; http://www.unesco.org/opi/eng/unescopress/98-59e.htm

Simulations

Simulations are fun, fascinating, intellectually inspiring, stimulating and innovative. This method allows you to become actively involved in the learning process. You discover for yourself, instead of just accepting what others tell you! "What would *I* do in this circumstance?", is the question here. But at the same time you slip into a certain role, you try to feel and think like a manager or a politician might react.

In a simulation you convert a part of the world into a model, in order to better understand it. You see the world's behavior in the simulation like in a mirror. Various conditions

an analysis might be to "assess the (internal and external) factor's which determine the current performance of your group/ company/ organization."

The SWOT process helps to discover ambiguities, pros and cons of a situation or a solution. You can fill into a simple grid the characteristics according to the four categories: *Strength* and *Opportunities* to underline the potential, whereas *Weaknesses* and *Threats* draw attention to possible failures. The grouping into a chart allows easy evaluation and review. At the time of the final decision one is aware of certain areas which require special attention and care! Example: A group too huge in number (= possible weekness), could lead to a lack of corporate identity among the individual members or to communication problems, etc. (= threats). (see also the article on the following page) – for a copy of a SWOT chart visit:

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/5349/swotol.html>

influence and change things. In a simulation you play through these changes in order to predict the behavior in reality. This mechnism is used in computer simulations, for example.

In summary, simulations may help you to

- "understand why observed events occur,
 - identify problem areas before implementation,
 - explore the effects of modifications,
 - confirm that all variables are known,
 - evaluate ideas and identify inefficiencies,
 - gain insight and stimulate creative thinking,
 - communicate the integrity and feasibility of your plans"
- (© www.simulationdynamics.com/Page3.html).

These characteristics of a simulation are also used to explore the difficulties and complexities of negotiations in a most realistic way. Students might debate in a “simulated” UN Security Council the pros and cons of intervening in a certain regional conflict. Each student is representing a particular country and certain (contradictory) interests. Imagine, the same students could also represent different managers in a company, who meet to agree on matters like schedule optimization, best delivery performance or optimum resource utilization. See also http://hcs.harvard.edu/~hnmun/nmun99/html/contact_us/specialized.html, <http://www.nmun.org/>, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Olympus/4962/un.html>.

“The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal theirs to them.”

Benjamin Disraeli

Teaching cases, e.g. <http://www.hkkk.fi/~casepubl/main.htm>; <http://www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/isd/files/goodcase.htm>; <http://sfswww.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/isd/files/cases/reinvent.htm>; are more specific, but produce similar effects: group dynamic interaction and strategic reaction are emphasized. Participants are encouraged to employ broad background knowledge and socio-communicative skills. The method supports the development of management and negotiation skills. It allows the trainer to discover the individual talents of the trainees.

There are no limits to this game, which is somewhat similar to role playing! A simulation is not the real world, but aims to be most realistic. Through this combination it gives way for CreACTIVE problem solving! What are you waiting for?

held from 7-11 December 1998 in Windhoek, Namibia involving rural youth specialists from the four countries that will be field-testing the process in 1999. The Namibian Ministry of Youth and Sport hosted the workshop with participants from the Ministries of Agriculture of Zimbabwe and Ghana, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries from Zambia.

Strategic planning is an action-oriented process by which all significant stakeholders envision the future of their organization and together decide what it will become and how to get there. The final document is a strategic action plan, which needs to be integrated into the on-going organizational planning and budget process. For rural youth programming, the recommended process will be highly participatory. This “top-down/bottom-up” approach involves youth themselves, parents, local volunteer leaders and organizational field staff, in addition to top management and programme leaders. It is often said that the process of strategic planning, under these circumstances, is as or more important than the resulting document!

The model decided upon during the workshop involves four phases: (1) setting the stage, (2) strategic foundations, (3) strategic action plan and (4) assessing progress. After the scope of the process is decided and the commitment from top management determined, a steering committee is formed. The first major activity is a planing-to-plan workshop. This is one of the most critical steps in the entire process. If this is not done well, it could jeopardize the success of all the steps to follow.

More information on the participatory strategic planning for rural youth programming will be reported in future issues of *YouthWorks*. An article on the topic will also appear soon electronically in *SD Dimensions* through FAO’s Web page <http://www.fao.org/sd> “Extension & Education”. Or write to us, requesting the “SDRE publication list”. The guide should be available by the end of 2000.

Strategic Planning for Rural Youth Programming

New Initiative on Food Security and Sustainable Development

A major recommendation of the 1995 FAO *Expert Consultation on Extension Rural Youth Programmes and Sustainable Development* was that assistance be provided to organizations wishing to carry out strategic planning. **The experts felt that strategic planning is a necessary first step for any government or NGO wishing to expand and strengthen an existing rural youth programme or establish a new one. FAO was asked to develop guidelines to assist member countries implement such a process.** As a result, a major FAO activity is taking place during 1998-99 to respond to that request.

The activity, being carried in anglophone sub-Saharan Africa has three major components: (1) carrying out a workshop to design the recommended process, (2) field testing the model in selected countries and (3) writing a guide. To begin the activity, a small regional workshop was

MINISTERS from 146 NATIONS ADOPT DECLARATION on YOUTH

Youth ministers and representatives of 146 States committed their governments to placing national youth policy formulation, implementation, follow-up processes and funding at the highest political levels during the global conference from 8 to 12 August 1998 in Lisbon, Portugal.

Closing the **first-ever World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon**, delegations adopted, by acclamation as orally amended, the "**Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes**", which committed nations and the international community to taking actions in such areas as youth participation, development, peace, education, employment, health, and drug and substance abuse. *For further information visit:* <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/>