

Personal Best Thinking: Develop Your Creativity For Maximum Success

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We have all experienced that “AHA” moment when we connected an idea we had struggled to understand with an experience that made the idea perfectly clear. This experiential learning process is fundamental to best thinking.

Those who develop best thinking become experts in their fields. They gain increasing esteem from their peers and a confidence level that places them at the top of their profession. Best thinking becomes an attitude of continuous discovery. Best thinkers don't segment their thinking into periodic events. They make strategic thinking a regular process.

People who take best thinking to its highest level interact with others who have a mutual desire to share knowledge, education, experience and wisdom with one another. A burst of creativity flows from the combined energies and intellects of those who share experiences and build from a combined base.

When this happens, the participants create knowledge greater than the sum of the parts, a case where two plus two can truly become five. Everyone involved raises their personal effectiveness to a higher level than they could achieve by themselves.

In this article I will share the reasons why best thinking is particularly important in today's business environment and will present ways you can develop your best thinking ability to become a top player in your profession. Sole practitioners, service providers and company executives can all benefit from personal best thinking.

Best Thinking Levels

When we strive to become experts in our field, we build expertise through formal education and practical experience. Over time, experiential learning allows us to effectively apply our knowledge to a wide variety of situations. At this level of best thinking, our educational gaps, innate ability, and personal biases constrict our expertise, keeping our learning one dimensional. We need more knowledge and experience than we possess but often fail to recognize that need.

It comes as a surprise to many people that when they build increased experience and knowledge through interaction with other professionals, they raise their best thinking to a level they never expected to achieve.

This highest level of best thinking happens because group interaction supports expanded creative thinking. We build our expertise on a far wider base of education and experience than we could have attained by ourselves. We rise above our personal limitations and biases. Individual gems of wisdom and experience from many sources combine to form a creative base of practical knowledge.

Historical Perspective

Many of us remember when change in business happened slowly. Executives and professionals could develop best thinking over time through reading and continuing education. Interpersonal interaction, though important, was not critical to increasing our expertise.

Today technology changes faster than ever, creating a business environment in which we find it difficult to keep up with current practices by using only our personal resources. We cannot read books and get practical experience fast enough to maintain the necessary expertise. Interaction with others with complementary experience is now the only way to develop best thinking.

Organizations are an excellent place to develop best thinking because the organizational culture promotes creative interaction within company teams. As professionals, we do not have this luxury because our support groups are not self-contained within a single organizational environment. We must develop our own creative teams.

Effective Attitudes for Best Thinking

To embrace best thinking, professionals need to adjust their attitudes and behaviors.

Best thinking is a continual process, not an event. We must develop an “I’m always learning” mentality. We cannot wait for the annual convention. We must make regular dialogue with others a way of life. When we notice and remember the little gems of wisdom we get from others, experiential learning happens, giving us “AHA” moments and great leaps ahead in our thinking.

When we share with others, we need a strong sense of self and a positive mental attitude, which allows us to interact comfortably with others and to accept them even when they have very different ideas. People with strong self-awareness understand their emotions, strengths, limitations, values and motives at a deep level. They are honest with themselves about themselves. They know the direction they want their life to take and why.

When we ask others to participate with us in a dialog about our projects and concerns, we must share with them. These wide-ranging, in-depth creative discussions must involve true give and take between the two parties for the absolute best thinking to take place.

To develop a strong give and take relationship, become significant in the lives of others. People with significance understand that they contribute to the success of others. They ask, “How can I help you?” They dedicate their time and energy to the success of those who help them achieve their success. When you get others to realize that you truly care about them and have their best interests at heart, you will have created a relationship that fosters best thinking.

In contrast, the self-centered person loses the opportunity to develop the highest level of best thinking because he focuses too much on himself, making it difficult for others to interact with him. He does not have the give and take attitude necessary for interpersonal dialog.

You must be non-judgmental when you interact with others. Accept others for what they can contribute. Don’t force your values and expectations on them. Don’t expect more than they can give. Be open to all contributions.

When you engage in open-ended discussions, use the creative right side of your brain. You will discover that no wrong answers exist and that everything is possible. The more ideas you develop the better. You can later use the left side of your brain to analyze the ideas you have created.

Summary

Best thinking at a wide-ranging interpersonal level is imperative in today’s fast-paced business climate with its ever-changing technology. Thinking only at the personal level is insufficient because high level best thinking never happens in a vacuum. When you communicate with others on a continuous basis,

you develop and maintain your status as an expert in your field. You will achieve “AHA” moments by being non-judgmental and remembering that everything is possible. Nurture a mind open to all ideas.

Develop a strong sense of self-awareness and confidence. You will be more genuine and open with others when you have confidence in your own abilities and ideas.

Develop significance in the lives of others. You will foster the highest level of best thinking when others realize that you are giving your time and energy to their success and they can contribute to yours.

Most importantly, best thinking is not an event but a continuous thought process. Ask everyone to contribute their thoughts and experience as you seek the gems of knowledge that will turn into that “AHA” experience.

To quote John Wooden, “It’s what you learn after you know it all that counts!”

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