

Creativity techniques

Creative ideas are developed by opening up new pathways in the brain in order to reconfigure existing thoughts and generate creative approaches to a given challenge. A variety of methods have been developed to foster this process. Those relevant to the area of children's television production are briefly outlined below.

Openness and awareness

Creativity is primarily a matter of the internal mindset. In order to think out of the box, openness and curiosity (a beginner's mind) and, as far as possible, a well-trained awareness are called for. The more limited the awareness horizon is, the fewer new ideas will be generated and made accessible to the consciousness. Exercises designed to train awareness encompass, for example, targeted perception employing all the senses or the random perception of noises with the eyes closed – without analysing them or becoming entangled in thought processes. "BrainGym" (Hyatt, 2007) can help to activate both halves of the brain. Typical exercises of this type would be to trace an imaginary figure of 8 with your eyes or to describe a large figure of 8 with outstretched arms (Noack, 2012).

Creative techniques

Brainwriting, e.g. "Eskimo storming": All associations relating to a particular subject matter are written down within the time frame of 1 minute. Any mental gap is bridged by inserting the filler word "Eskimo" (Thomas, 2014).

635: This method involves 6 participants who each write down 3 ideas on a worksheet in 5 minutes and then the forms are rotated.

Clicking questions: With a clearly formulated objective in mind, a variety of questions are asked and answered along

the lines of "Without using words, how can we express what this product does in the mind of the user?" This stimulates the production of a wealth of creative ideas (Pricken, 2010).

Analogies: By harnessing thought processes which are initially irrelevant new lines of thinking (synectics) can be inspired. A stimulus word, e.g. tree, is taken as the point of departure for the analysis and the problem is solved through analogies: What are the characteristics of a tree and what do they tell us about the nature of the problem we are trying to solve? Pictures are used as stimulus and then, for example, the characteristics of the picture are used to inspire the ensuing creative work on the problem at hand.

"Bible pricking": This method involves inserting a knife into a bible – or another book – from the side. The random passage or sentence found in the book is then used as stimulus for analysing the problem (Thomas, 2014).

Morphological matrix: A problem is split up into different small units. A partial solution is found for each one of these units and the partial solutions are then combined into an overall solution (Ritchey, 2013).

"Think different"

Walt Disney is reputed to have specifically fostered creative thought processes by assimilating the perspectives of dreamers, critics and realists. A suitably equipped room helped him to empathise with each of their viewpoints. This **Disney method** can easily be implemented by using different chairs or by assigning different roles to the members of the group (e.g. Dilts, 1994). An extension of this is the **6 thinking hats** principle whereby the members of the group are given hats (or place cards) of different colours in order to inspire different thought patterns.

White = analytical thinking, focus on facts; red = emotional thinking, focus on feelings; black = critical thinking, focus on problems and risks; yellow = optimistic thinking, focus on benefits and opportunities; green = creative thinking, focus on unusual ideas; blue = organisational thinking, focus on grouping and structuring (de Bono, 2015).

Janusian thinking: Combining opposites and seeing "the other side", trying ridiculous combinations and impossible oppositions (Rothenberg, 2011).

In order to facilitate creative thought processes it is helpful to see the problem from a different perspective. In order to understand the target group for children's television, it is often extremely helpful to incorporate their perspective. Haptic experiences, e.g. with children's toys, the typical taste, e.g. of sweets, or the smell of girl's perfume can be sensory experiences that generate creative ideas which are more closely in tune with the target group. ■

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