

CREATIVITY IN FUNDRAISING

This training programme is highly experiential and so it's difficult to portray the content fully in a brief overview, and nor would we want it to – you have to come on the course to experience a new way of working! Having said that here's a flavour....

CREATIVITY can be defined in the following ways, as:

- activity that brings about something new
- imagining new possibilities
- investing in an existing object with new properties
- seeing or performing things in a different way than thought possible.



Other essentials for creativity:

"To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong" **Joseph Chilton Pearce**

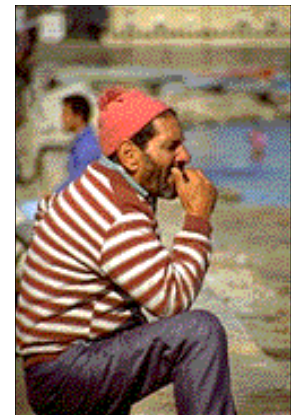
"Creativity is a type of learning process where the teacher and pupil are located in the same individual." **Arthur Koestler**

PARADIGMS

In developing creativity we have to shift our 'paradigms' which are also known variously as our:

- Frame of reference
- Point of view
- Perspective
- Way of seeing the world

Why is it important to shift our views? Because our perspectives can also act as 'limiting beliefs' which can prevent us from thinking in new ways or trying different ways of working – in essence, they can keep us doing things in the same old way. And if we do things in the same old ways we shouldn't be surprised if we get the same old results!



An example of a possible paradigm shift is set out below – it may seem obvious when you look at it in writing but the reality is that in every day life we often don't challenge our accepted way of viewing things.

I often go to funding seminars where participants complain to the funder about things like, for example, the short timescale or the small budget or the complicated application form – well if you shift your point of view, perhaps you could be grateful that there is a fund, and that someone is there promoting it to you, and answering your questions about the form - that's the paradigm shift.

So, are you stuck in some old ways of viewing funding or the fundraising world?
And what would it be like if you left some of those 'old' views behind and took on some new ones?

SOME KEY CONCEPTS IN CREATIVITY

- Aspiration - Your hopes and dreams for the new
- Motivation - How willing are you to try new things?
- Inspiration - Where do ideas come from?
- Exploration - What research or assets are required?
- Implementation - How will/can you put innovation into practice?
- Elevation - What happens when you reach a new level?

The course covers all of these concepts in detail but here let's look at 'Aspiration', as an example:

ASPIRATION

Can you imagine what your organisation will be like in 20 years time?

More importantly can you imagine **what you would like it to be** like in 20 years time?

To help you do this, try to answer the questions below - and do this as if you were in a world without *criticism* or *negativity*...

So, your project/organisation in 20 years time.....

- What will it look like, smell like, taste like – what services will it be delivering?
- What will it feel like to use the services, or to manage the organisation?
- What will people be saying about it? What profile will it have?
- Who will be involved? How big will it be? How will it have expanded/developed?
- What resources will you have at your disposal – people, money, facilities?



This 'imagining' is the first step in delivering a new reality – following on from this 'vision', examine the other points in the concepts list to begin to create a way to the vision.

CREATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

There are ways to encourage creativity and ways to stifle it! Don't think you can just order it up. There are many crucial things to consider here – and you need to be aware that our traditional culture, management and verbal interaction styles rarely stimulate creativity....

So the right physical environment is whatever **the individual** thinks is stimulating, relaxing, thought provoking – it could be anything from walking in the country by oneself to a team brainstorm. It might be drawing pictures or mind maps – it might be quiet contemplation or background music. Think about your ideal environment and try to create that for yourself – ask others what they want.

There are many examples of situations where creativity is easily stifled – obviously these are to be avoided – some examples:

- Where there is a regular day to day routine, or pressing other matters
- Where every idea is met with criticism or comment
- Where the thoughts or the creative process is interrupted
- Where history or 'experience' is more important than the future, e.g. "*We've tried that already*"
- Where thoughts cannot even be explored because they are 'impractical'

It's almost impossible to be creative in a negative environment – come on the course and learn how to deal with some of the most common 'roadblocks'.

IS CREATIVITY ALWAYS BASED ON A NEW IDEA?

Absolutely not! Inspiration can come in many ways and from many sources. Here are just some of the ways we cover on the course:

Using 'theoretical' ways:

- putting 2 concepts or items together e.g. the wind surfer
- new applications of existing technology e.g. Dyson 'cyclone' vacuum cleaner

Using business concepts:

- increasing sales volume e.g. 3 for 2 offers
- secondary spend e.g. pay entry and encourage discretionary spend in the shop
- adding value e.g. and you get money off a visit to....
- Process re-engineering e.g. eliminate stockpiling or eliminate waste

CREATIVITY AND BOUNDARIES

It's critical to remember that creativity knows no bounds, so don't artificially create any – if you do create boundaries you are already limiting the creative process, and are falling back into paradigms. This can be heard throughout the country on any given day – “Now please, let's just have sensible suggestions” – where 'sensible' is defined by the speaker's own paradigms. Many good ideas just aren't sensible e.g. the bouncing bomb; the wind-up radio.

So, creative fundraising should not just be an outward focussed endeavour – it's easy to think we can only 'do more with more' – what about 'doing the same with less' or better still 'doing more with less'.

An example of this inward looking approach is an 'asset review'. This entails looking at all the organisations assets and seeing how hard they are working or how hard they could work. And assets are not simply the bank balance and deposits – they can be anything from bricks and mortar, to human to environmental, and social assets. We look at this in more detail on the course.

Creativity in funding is not just limited to schemes or processes – it can also be to do with how you present your projects. For example:

UNIQUE SELLING POINT (USP's)

Think about how you can make your scheme stand out – this might be through how you present your application (e.g. impacting photographs) or through developing USP's. USP's differentiate you from other schemes – they can be simple or complex. You might be 'the only scheme in North Yorkshire doing...', or 'the only one doing it this way...' Your scheme might be different because it's 'bigger, faster, longer, wider', etc. A key point is to make it meaningful – don't construct things that aren't true or don't make any sense.

REFRAME YOUR PROJECTS FOR FUNDERS

It's sometimes possible to alter your project or set-up in order to better meet funders criteria. How far you do this depends on many things – your principles, your scheme, your organisation, to name a few. Here are a few examples of reframing: Can someone else apply with you in a partnership, to extend your impact/alter your eligibility? Can you tailor your project into targeting a specific age group required by the funder? Can you apply for part of the project costs from a funder?

AND FINALLY...

Creative fundraising can often mean leaving your comfort zone – so be prepared because these changes can be uncomfortable; old rules no longer apply; the 'benefits' may take time to accrue and it can mean greater commitment if you're going to be really creative!

What is a good idea?

One that happens