

Communiqué

The Creative Problem Solving Group, Inc.

Volume XIV • Fall 2005

6 Grand View Trail. P.O. Box 648, Orchard Park, New York 14127 • Phone (716) 667-1324

Reflections on Practice in Creativity and Innovation

by **Scott Isaksen**

Editor's Note: In a personal essay by CPSB's founder the reader is provided with 6 specific implications based on Scott's unique insights from 30 years of work in the worlds of academics and business.

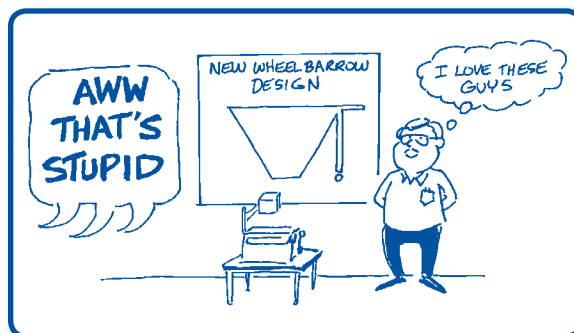
When I think about the field of creativity and innovation, I see big and important opportunities! For this final print version of our Communiqué, I wanted to take the opportunity to share a few of the insights I have gleaned from the transition from being a full-time academic professor and researcher in the field of creativity and innovation to being a full-time creativity and innovation consultant and practitioner. My frame of reference has been formed first by studying creativity and teaching creative problem solving to children, adolescents, teenagers and adults in a variety of academic settings. I see several important advantages from having started from an academic point of view.

Benefits Derived from Academe

Accumulating knowledge. There is a great deal of literature that helps provide a foundation for creativity theory, research, and reflection. Our professional library at CPSB boasts more than 3,000 books and articles! There is no shortage of information that can help guide professional practice. Starting from an academic mind-set has provided a clear, deep, and solid foundation for our practice.

Growing community of scholars. There is a diverse community of scholars who are dedicated to continuing serious research and development within the field. Although

creativity and innovation are not really disciplines in the 'true' sense, many scholars from universities, consulting organizations, and businesses are engaged in fruitful inquiry that can, and should guide practice. Having more than 30 years of experience as an academic has afforded the opportunity to meet, collaborate, and interact with very knowledgeable researchers who have contributed to our expanding knowledge. Maintaining these relation-



In This Issue

Reflections on Practice.....	1
Book Review	5
CPS in the Classroom	6
What's Happening	10
CRU.....	11
Igniting Creative Potential.....	12
Comments on Positive Thinking	15
21st Century and SOQ.....	18
Progress on VIEW.....	22
CPSB.....	23

“The world hates change yet it is the only thing that has brought progress.”

Charles Kettering

CPSB

ships through our dedication to research provides us with sufficient breadth to help identify emerging issues and trends to help stay current and provide a bridge between the Ivory Tower and Board Room.

A well tuned “crap detector.” Despite so many advances in the deliberate study and development of creativity, there is still a great deal of “fluff” in the field. Having been engaged in studying creativity since 1970, I have come across a great deal of re-invention, renaming, and just plain chicanery. Having held (and continuing to hold) an academic ethic (Shils, 1983), it has become easier to sort the wheat from the chaff. We can readily invest our resources in those topics and issues that can make a new difference and promote the field, rather than squandering them on reinventing, renaming, or re-discovering what already exists.



***The opportunity is to find a balance
between research and practice ...***

The Challenge of Rigor vs. Relevance

Reflective practice (Schön, 1983) is best served by having a balance of experience and expertise with both reflecting and practicing. Resolving the dilemma between the academic’s focus on rigor, and the practitioner’s focus on relevance, requires respecting both points of view, and then analyzing and synthesizing the insights from each. This is a huge challenge for both academics and practitioners. I left the formal academic setting eight years ago, and now devote my time and energy to professional practice at CPSB. My practical experience started while I was a full-time professor, doing some part-time consulting. My world-view was formed and has been influenced by this commitment and experience. My colleagues and students conducted a series of impact studies that provided extremely useful insights into how our method and tools were being used and even integrated with other methods. These studies and consulting engagements were short-term excursions into the practical world that were enlightening and rewarding, but I always had to return to the somewhat insulated world of the academic institution. Being a full-time practitioner for the past eight years has taught me some valuable lessons! There are three main distinctions that I have found as a result of reflecting on the past 30 years.

Real world versus the academic world. I have always believed that there is nothing more practical than a good theory. I still do. However, there are meaningful differences between being anchored in the academic world and working in the “real” world. As a professor, I could pretty much tell you where I would be, and what I’d be doing, almost a year ahead of time. I got the idea for writing this piece in Buffalo and

discussed it with some colleagues in Sarasota during February; made some progress while in Cape Town in March; London, Barcelona, and Atlanta in April; Brussels in July, Paris and London over the following months, and finished writing this in Buffalo (and final edits on a flight between Sydney and Bangkok). In some cases, I only found out about the location or a specific client engagement a few weeks or even days ahead of time. Although there are many advantages of having discretion over time, the real world seems to operate at a faster, and more chaotic, pace.

As an academic administrator, I would be required to attend any number of meetings that had, at best, limited value and impact. I simply can’t afford to do that now. It could take more than a year to acquire necessary resources at the University, and only after writing proposals, presenting

and defending the expenditures, and doing some important political maneuvering. Now, if we (or our clients) need a particular resource, and it makes a difference to the business, we can get it overnight. There are still a few meetings that don’t make sense, but far fewer than when I was in the academic setting.

My shift in context has provided me a valuable insight into why I often felt that practitioners were impatient. People in the business world really do have to do more and more with less and less, cheaper, and better. The criterion “better” is an interesting one. Those who work in academic settings also face the challenge of doing more with less, but there are much clearer measures of better in the real world (and very few tenures!). It is easier to know that you are having a meaningful impact in the business world when you see new products capture market share and organizations exceed fiscal goals.

The opportunity is to find a balance between research and practice to resolve the rigor versus relevance dilemma. We seek this balance by continuing to work on scientific investigations into topics that are relevant and useful in our practice and work with clients. We maintain a commitment to reflective practice by debriefing and examining feedback from each and every application and engagement. This focus on learning from doing has provided our group very rich insights and an improved understanding of salient issues surrounding our practice.

Development versus selection of people. Having been prepared as an elementary school teacher, it was my job to draw out that which was within. Armed with a commitment to public education, I believed and acted as though you could

teach anyone anything. Although learning is still a central concern for businesses, the focus is more on finding the right people for the right job.

This shift in focus from emphasizing the development of talents to the selection and use of these talents indicates a change in attention from learning to applying. I find that this reassignment of priorities is best illustrated by the phrase “don’t spend energy trying to put in what God left out.” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). I find a similar thrust in the manifesto from the late E. Paul Torrance. He discouraged us from seeking to be “well-rounded” and encouraged all of us to fall in love with something and then pursue this with great personal intensity – passion.

This does not mean that the focus on identification and selection of creative talent is devoid of creative learning. In fact, the capacity to engage in continuous learning with curiosity and openness is a talent itself. It does mean that the focus of the creativity practitioner is more about taking people from where they are, and what they know or can do, and then transforming these talents into something better, more useful.

In the ever changing and competitive business world, it is critical to find and keep the best people for each job. Once the right people are selected, development and learning are key to retaining them. Learning maintains an important role, but people must meet a threshold of ability and skill in order to learn and maintain a place within an organization.

Focus on results versus focus on process. While an academic, my center of attention was on improving our understanding of the creative process, and then helping people learn and apply tools, guidelines, language, and a process framework. It was then the learner’s responsibility to use these insights to create results. Now that my concentration is on practice, the emphasis is much more on producing results.

When the center of attention was on process and people, the role of content and specific context was minimal. With an increasing emphasis on results, the subject matter, topics, and issues as well as the circumstances and environment surrounding the task play a more prominent role.

From my point of view, the only way to get results is to focus on the people, process, and place. All of these factors must be considered in order to obtain meaningful and new outcomes. The significance and weight is on results for most

practitioners, particularly for those of us who must compete for clients’ attention and resources.

Implications

It’s about results. From a practitioner point of view, the work we do is much more focused on producing desired outcomes that meet real business needs. The major issue is having an impact that is relevant and useful. This means a much tighter, and more focused, management of time, talent, and resources.

An implication is that our field needs user-friendly resources. These must be theoretically and empirically sound and must deliver clear and concrete results. For example, our emphasis is on helping understand and lever differences in people; learning and applying practical and powerful process tools, and obtaining useful insights about the environment and working climate. We must develop resources that are both sound and lead to practical insights for our clients.

Authentic Communication is key. I will never forget the first time we had to create and deliver a 30-second elevator speech to describe to a senior executive what CPSB actually did. Coming from an academic perspective, I almost found it impossible to encapsulate the complexity of what we did in less than 30 seconds!

William of Occum, a 14th century philosopher and logician, suggested that if two theories or methods were generally equal, the simpler explanation was better. Part of authentic communication is providing simple (not simplistic!), clear, and relevant information. This is enough of a challenge. Now, add the factors of meaningful dialogue, engaging and

genuine listening, or the lack of a common vocabulary – and we can understand the communication challenge. While working with Jim Kouzes on a client engagement, he provided an interesting challenge for leaders that I think relates to authentic communication. He shared with us the challenge of finding your own voice. Finding your own voice is not a matter of tools or techniques. It’s more about engaging in some soul searching and reflecting on time-honored experience.

The importance of agility. Close working relationships take time to develop, and they require being available often on very short notice. It’s about being able to seize emerging opportunities. Being a reflective practitioner in this field demands fast processing and synthesizing vast amounts of

...the best relationships are based on credible competence and confidence, mutual commitment, and trustworthiness

information (thinking), seizing opportunities for short term action (doing), and swift and clear decision making (believing). If we seek the challenge of helping our clients keep up, stay ahead, maintain and grow their organizations, then we need to be nimble.

We also need to be ready, willing, and able to deal with what Stan Gyskiewicz (1999) calls "positive turbulence". Those of us in this field need to deal effectively with permanent volatility and help our clients build adaptive organizations. In order to do this, reflective practitioners need to be resilient, learning from their mistakes and maintaining high levels of energy and confidence along the way.

Trust and confidence are foundations. Being a trusted advisor means maintaining confidentiality, keeping current, and earning the right to advise. A trusted advisor is not a position that comes with a title, but a relationship that is built over time.

As I see it, the best relationships are based on credible competence and confidence (knowing what you know), mutual commitment (agreeing on the terms and exchange), and trustworthiness (being honest). Kouzes and Posner (1993) refer to a similar set of ideas as credibility. All I know is that my best personal and professional relationships have these elements with integrity. The relationships that have not been satisfying or have not lasted lacked at least one of these ingredients.

It's not about perfection (no one is perfect). I have had to face clients and tell them about mistakes I made and offer to be a part of the solution. More often than not, these relationships have grown, become long lasting, and even more valuable.

The need for connectedness. I used to think about the need for balance. We all know about the need for a dynamic balance between generating and focusing, balancing our work and personal lives, and balancing our budgets (or checkbooks). Although balance is still important, the heart of the matter is working on seeing things as a whole. Haines (1998) sees a system as a set of components that work together for the overall goal of the whole. Systems thinking relates to the way we see and think about things. The aim is to consider first the whole, its fit and relationship to its environment. Examining its parts or what is contained within the whole is secondary.

This is one of the reasons I am so excited to be in this field now. A number of scholars are starting to take a more ecological approach to their research (Isaksen, Puccio, Treffinger, 1993) and our approaches to practical applications are moving more "top-down" (rather than bottom-up) and becoming more systemic. Rather than being guided only by short-term attention and perception of day-to-day behavior, we can also

consider a framework based on aspiration and an image of a desired future.

Considering both the top and bottom line. Those of us who show concern for practical, concrete results are often very focused on the bottom-line impact, benefits, profitability and growth in revenue. Reflecting on our work is often aimed at doing it faster, better, and cheaper. But reflection can also be about how we are making a positive difference in the world. We recently explored a few of the connections between servant leadership and creativity (Freeman, Isaksen, & Dorval, 2002) and found that those who seek to empower and enable others to succeed, must attend to obtaining concrete results and, at the same time, they must aspire to a "higher" calling aimed at even more laudible and lasting purposes.

Conclusion

Seeking rigorous relevance is a continuous challenge, but one that is worthwhile. No one can claim to have accomplished the definitive resolution to the rigor versus relevance dilemma. It describes a journey rather than a destination. We at CPSB will continue our commitment to invest in the scientific development and practical application of assessments that provide insight into creativity and innovation. Since we see CPS version 6.1™ as an open, dynamic and complex adaptive system, we will continue to work toward obtaining a better picture of the whole. Our journey will continue to be guided by our belief that creativity is a fundamental human resource and that it can be deliberately developed and nurtured.

Author Information

Scott is the President of The Creative Problem Solving Group, Inc. He has published over 150 articles or chapters in a variety of academic journals, popular publications and books.

Scott is a colleague of the Creative Education Foundation (CEF) and has received their Service and Commitment Award (1989) and the Distinguished Leader Award (1995). Scott is currently the Vice President of the Center for Creative Learning in Sarasota, Florida.

Since 1984, Scott has conducted more than 1000 programs by working with over 250 organizations and groups in more than twenty-four states and fourteen different countries. In 1996, he was awarded the State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

References & Readings

Buckingham, M. & Coffman, C. (1999). *First, break all the rules: What the world's greatest managers do differently*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Freeman, T. L., Isaksen, S. G., & Dorval, K. B. (2002). Servant leadership and creativity. In L. C. Spears & M. Lawrence (Eds.), *Focus on leadership: Servant leadership in the 21st century* (pp. 257-268). New York: Wiley.

Gryskiewicz, S. S. (1999). *Positive turbulence: Developing climates for creativity, innovation and renewal*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Haines, S. G. (1998). *Systems thinking and learning*. Cambridge, MA: HRD Press.

Isaksen, S. G., Puccio, G., Treffinger, D. J. (1993). An ecological approach to creativity research: Profiling for creative problem solving. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, Vol. 27, Number 3, (pp. 149-170).

Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (1993). *Credibility: how leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shils, E. (1983). *The academic ethic*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.

Book Review

By Glenn Wilson

Bart, Chris. (2002). *A tale of two employees & the person who wanted to lead them*. Hamilton, Ontario, Canada: Corporate Missions Press, Inc. Where to purchase: In Toronto: Email: info@booksforbusiness.com / Toll Free: 1-800-668-9372 or through Canada's National Bookstore at <http://www.chapters.indigo.ca>.

Do you find that the most challenging issue you face on a daily basis is managing the outputs of those you are responsible for? Are you spending an inordinate amount of time on a few employees? So, how do you engage people in a way that assures you, that when left to themselves, the right choices will be made and employees are doing what the company needs them to do?

If you're asking yourself these kinds of questions, even once in a while, then buy, read, and apply this book! It's an easy to read book in which the author presents a common scenario of challenges faced by a manager responsible for improving the performance of two very different employees. Throughout this book you will be reminded (using a step-by-step action plan) of the importance of using and interpreting a stated vision.

You will also be reminded how asking the right questions and holding others accountable can lead to both employee and personal productivity along the way.

Folks, don't take this book lightly. I can hear some of you saying: "But I have done all that," or "I don't have the time," or "I could never ask my followers to do that." And that's OK. I'm sure you'll be reminded of these issues in your next performance review! (PS: If you hear yourself saying these things, you'll also want to read the book, "Yes...but" by Chic Thompson (1993, ISBN # 0-88730-660-8). If you have trouble finding it, email me at gwwilson@cpsb.com).

So go ahead, buy the book and follow the steps, then let me know how it helped in resolving your challenges. It will take you one hour to read and 3-6 months to implement. Dr. Bart has done a great job making the complex simple by getting us back to basics using a Socratic method leading to accountability, more productive behaviors, and hopefully sustainable organizational change. Cheers!

CPS in the Classroom: Blumberg Center Brings Program to Students

By Bill Littlejohn and Nancy Mayfield

In her first year, Kimberly Trate had only heard about Creative Problem Solving. The Indiana State University graduate student in school psychology got to see it in practice after she enrolled in a summer school class specially developed to present CPSB's Igniting Creative Potential program in a five-week format. Kimberly, who graduated in May 2005, was impressed with the experience.

"The versatility of CPS makes it an extremely beneficial tool. You can conduct a day-long CPS session with a room filled with people to work through a problem from beginning to end, or you can sit down by yourself and use one of the tools to help devise a solution or plan of action for yourself," Kimberly said.

Kimberly and others in her graduate-level class of future school psychologists and educators were the first group at ISU to take CPS training in a classroom setting. The first class was offered during Summer 2002. Taught by Bill Littlejohn, who is now former director of the ISU-based Blumberg Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Special Education, the class is an example of the Center's efforts to expand its outreach to bring CPS to Indiana educators and social service agency representatives.

The Indiana CPS Initiative, which operates under the auspices of the Blumberg Center, has trained nearly 800 special and general education administrators, teachers, university/college faculty, social service agency personnel, local Step Ahead and First Steps coordinators, and other not-for-profit and government agency personnel.

Traci Goddard, a school psychology major who graduated in May 2003, said she planned on using the skills she learned in the class to help educators solve problems in a creative, direct way. "CPS is direct and gets the job done without wasting time. It is also a simple, straightforward process that gets an end result," Traci said.

Our Blumberg Center training team usually presents the program in a five-day format that is broken down into separate two-day and three-day sessions. We wanted to find a way in which we could offer this unique training to ISU students who are pursuing careers that will put them in contact with

children and families. Thus, the 3-credit hour, summer school offering was developed. The course was also offered at ISU again in July 2003, Summer 2004 and will be offered annually thereafter.

Scott Isaksen and Brian Dorval from The Creative Problem Solving Group, Inc., were instrumental in assisting Bill Littlejohn, when he was Blumberg Center Director and Indiana Creative Problem Solving Initiative Program Director, in developing the ISU class. In addition to advising him, they shared a syllabus and materials from a similar course they had taught at Buffalo State College. These items helped Littlejohn lay the groundwork for the ISU course, which was offered to graduate students from the Department of Educational and School Psychology in the ISU School of Education. Littlejohn taught a two-week CPS course for the University of Winnipeg during July 2003.

The Indiana CPS Initiative has been funded by annual grants from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), Division of Exceptional Learners, since 1994. The Center provides training in the latest version of Creative Problem Solving (CPS Version 6.1™) through a licensed arrangement with The Creative Problem Solving Group, Inc. The project includes activities to customize programs and workshops for targeted groups and to help link CPS facilitators with entities interested in facilitation support services.

A CPS Impact Study conducted in 1999-2000 by the Blumberg Center demonstrated that persons the staff had trained in CPS, during the first six years of the project, were able to apply the problem solving methods learned in the CPS training immediately and effectively to a broad range of problems they encounter daily. A report on the details of the impact study was shared in *Communiqué* in its Fall 2001, Volume 10 issue.

We know CPS training is effective and practical, as evidenced by the feedback and examples of application we get from the network of people who have attended our programs. As part of our overall mission to connect ISU students and faculty with the Blumberg Center's work, we thought offering CPS training to Educational and School Psychology (EPSY) grad-

The versatility of CPS makes it an extremely beneficial tool

uate students would be a great thing. A core group of “traditional” graduate students attended the course on campus, while several ISU graduate students in other fields who are working professionals (including teachers, an assistant principal, and a college professor) took the course at another site in the traditional 5-full-consecutive-day format.

As the instructor for the CPS class, Littlejohn adapts the material from its traditional format and adds some extras, including guest speakers who use CPS “in the field” in a variety of ways. The speakers bring a breadth and depth of knowledge and first-hand experience in how CPS techniques have been successfully used in the settings the students likely will find themselves in someday, namely as school psychologists working with teachers, children and their families, and social service providers.

Among the speakers, were staff members and consultants from the Indiana Creative Problem Solving Initiative who use CPS in a variety of education and social service settings, including Facilitated Individualized Education Plans (FIEP), General Education Intervention teams, and social service agency wraparound efforts.

For example, Claire Thorsen, program coordinator for the FIEP program spoke directly to the role of school psychologists and how they can use CPS in an educational setting. With more than 20 years of experience working with special education districts, Claire shared many “hands-on” instances to which the students could relate. “I talked about using the CPS skills and tools to negotiate conferences and meetings and to help teachers provide some problem solving mechanisms,” Claire reported.

“These graduate students will someday be in a position where they will need to work and partner with parents and teachers to achieve joint outcomes. They can use CPS in so many ways – to set goals and objectives, to support both parents and schools in having a say in the kinds of training children will receive, and to encourage partnerships in meetings that might be tense,” she added.

In addition, several speakers addressed the use of CPS for General Education Intervention (GEI) teams. The Blumberg Center has trained over 150 school GEI teams (over 1,000 educators), across Indiana, in a modified version of CPS to help them address the needs of students facing special challenges in and out of the classroom.

Jennifer Sears, a graduate student in educational and school psychology who took the class, is putting what she learned to use as a facilitator for the CPS Initiative. “CPS offered me a way to conduct meetings and work with other people in a professional manner,” she says. “I appreciate that it has many tools, so I can personalize sessions to best meet clients’ needs.” The course presented an excellent opportunity for the students to hear how professionals are incorporating CPS and a number of tools to impact their work.

The Summer 2002 CPS class was taught over a five-week period, with class running from 10 a.m. to 11:50 a.m., five days a week. The text *Creative Approaches to Problem Solving*, (Isaksen, Dorval, &

Treffinger, 2000) was used to supplement the CPS training materials (Toolbox for Creative Problem Solving, Basic Tools and Resources. Isaksen, Dorval & Treffinger, 1998). The format was changed to longer hours to complete the class in three weeks during Summer 2003.

Several differences are of note between our usual two- and three-day workshop format, in which daily sessions run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the five-week (and three week), summer format, in which sessions ran two-hours per day, five days a week or three hours per day for three weeks. During the summer class:

Several differences are of note between our usual two- and three-day workshop format, in which daily sessions run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the five-week (and three week), summer format, in which sessions ran two-hours per day, five days a week or three hours per day for three weeks. During the summer class:

- Reading assignments, tests, and guest speakers helped to enrich student learning
- During tool teachback, summer school students taught three tools each instead of the one tool each usually taught in our workshops
- Tools were introduced in, and students experienced all three stages in the Understanding the Challenge Component (Constructing Opportunities, Exploring Data, Framing Problems)
- A six to twelve page paper was required by the end of the class

These elements added to the CPS experience for the students and gave them exposure to many more resource people and materials than they would have had under the usual circumstances. For example, the required paper would be impossible to complete in the two- and three-day traditional format. The assignment gave students a chance to demonstrate a transfer or extension of learning and insights into the CPS process, and its professional and ethical uses.

The paper added to the total experience and yielded some interesting subject matters. Students were asked to either re-

CPS is direct and gets the job done without wasting time. It is also a simple, straight-forward process that gets an end result.

view research in an area pertinent to CPS and focus on specific issues and processes or to discuss the application of a CPS facilitation. The CPS facilitation was discussed by describing a situation leading to the intervention, providing the Task Summary used, the outcome and key learnings for the facilitator, and client and resource group reactions to the intervention.

One student, a teacher who was part of the off-site cohort, wrote about how she used CPS within her middle school community to choose textbooks that would be read to the students as part of a program to reduce bullying. An on-campus student addressed the issue of maintaining a creative spirit in elementary school children and how CPS can provide a framework for developing innovative and useful solutions. Readers can see selected student papers on the Blumberg Center's website at: <http://www.indstate.edu/soe/blumberg/cpsstudent.html>.

The length of the course also lent itself to the introduction of more CPS resources. In addition to copies of *Communiqué* and newsletters from the Center for Creative Learning, more than a dozen books related to CPS were introduced. They included such titles as *A Kick in the Seat of the Pants*, by Roger von Oech; *Adaptors and Innovators*, by Michael Kirton; and *Lost Prizes*, by Ken McCluskey, Phillip Baker, Se O'Hagan, and Donald Treffinger.

Another interesting observation from the on-campus summer school class was that practice problems identified by students for use in the class were predominantly of a personal rather than a professional nature. Several focused on financial/budget needs of graduate students. (In our off-site programs, attendees are practicing professionals and their practice problems are predominately related to their work rather than personal matters.)

Our workshops always include activities on the last day to help the participants take their learning forward – to plan the next steps, etc. All of the EPSY graduate students had at least one more year of school and little professional experience. The “taking it forward” activity for them was to develop personal plans and to start drafts of letters of inquiry and/or resumes to call attention to their powerful CPS skills.

We are pleased with the success of the course and look forward to bringing CPS to even more professionals-in-preparation and Indiana educators in the future.

Article Sidebar

In addition to providing CPS Foundations and Facilitator Development Programs across Indiana, the Blumberg Center's CPS Initiative has brought many other CPS-related programs to Indiana and Indiana State University. Among them are:

- A thriving CPS for General Education Intervention (GEI) Teams program that is assisting teachers at elementary and middle schools to search for new ways to improve a student's challenging behavior and/or learning in the classroom. Over 150 school teams (over 1,000 educators) have been trained between 1998 and December 2003.
- The Facilitated Individualized Education Program (FIEP), by J.D. Little and Associates, was introduced during 2002-03 in Indiana. Under the auspices of the Indiana CPS Initiative, the Blumberg Center is bringing this facilitation training to the state's coordinators of required meetings for admission to special education programs.
- In partnership with Wraparound Vigo County, and Choices™ Technical Assistance for Indiana System of Care Communities, which link social service agencies to provide a “system of care” for children and families with complex needs and uses CPS to develop creative solutions to support the families.
- Meeting facilitation requests from our constituents throughout the state. One recent example was a facilitation session done by the Blumberg Center's Bonnie Buddle as the result of a request from the Indiana Department of Education, Indiana Professional Standards Board, and the Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning (CELL). Buddle facilitated a planning cadre to look at the Model Standards for Licensing General and Special Education Teachers.

Readers are invited to see the Blumberg Center web page: <http://web.indstate.edu/soe/blumberg/> Check the left side of the page, go to CPS-I for information on the Center's CPS, CPS for GEI, FIEP, Publications and Research (including student papers on CPS) and more.

Author Information

Bill Littlejohn has recently retired as Director of the Blumberg Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Special Education, Project Director of the Indiana Creative Problem Solving Initiative, and an Associate Professor of Special Education, School of Education, Indiana State University. He is an accredited trainer and facilitator of CPSB's CPS 6.1 and was instrumental in the creation of the Indiana CPS Initiative.

Nancy Pieters Mayfield is a freelance writer and communications consultant who works for a variety of journalistic interests, including Reuters News Service, and university-affiliated organizations, such as the Blumberg Center. She has attended the two-day CPS training. She also is an Assistant Professor of Journalism at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

References & Readings

Isaksen, S.G., Dorval, K.B. & Treffinger, D.J. (2000). *Creative Approaches to Problem Solving*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt.

Isaksen, S.G., Dorval, K.B. & Treffinger, D.J. (1998). *Toolbox for Creative Problem Solving: Basic Tools and Resources*. Buffalo, NY: CPSB

Save the Trees - Receive Future Issues Via E-mail!

Dear Readers-

After this issue, we will only be distributing the Communiqué via email to our readers. Toward this end, we are asking that anyone interested in receiving the Communiqué electronically, please provide us with your e-mail address.

You can simply e-mail us (cpsb@cpsb.com) and you will be added to the list of 2,400 people who are already helping the environment.

Thank you!

Igniting Creative Potential™

Focusing the Power to Change



CPSB
THE CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING GROUP, INC.®



CPSB's Newest Member

CPSB is pleased to announce that Jesse Bergeron has joined our team as Manager of Research and Design. Jesse joined CPSB on September 12th, after completing a degree in graphic design from McIntosh College in New Hampshire. During his time in school he studied areas such as package design, print and page layout design, web design and multimedia. Jesse also has a background in the fields of mediation and conflict resolution. Jesse is well versed in the use of all key software programs as well as numerous graphic software packages. As Manager of Research and Design, Jesse will be working with clients, associates and suppliers to process and prepare assessments (The Situational Outlook Questionnaire, VIEW, etc.), help prepare presentations, assist with the day-to-day administration of CPSB, and help to design new products. Jesse will also be working on restructuring and streamlining the assessment and data processing system as one of his first major projects.

Jesse joins our team as Ken Lauer pursues other professional opportunities.

We look forward to Jesse's contributions to our group and hope you get the chance to meet or talk with him soon.

What's Happening

CPSB is pleased to announce that Dr. Geir Kaufmann, a member of CPSB's Creativity Research Unit, has received the prestigious "Emerald Award" for management research this year. The article for which Geir won the award is titled: "Two kinds of Creativity-but which ones?" This article appeared in "Creativity and Innovation Management", Vol. 13 No. 3 2004. Congratulations, Geir!

A new distance learning product has been co-developed with IBM. This distance learning product has been used within IBM and we have included it within our own ICP courses. The feedback we received has been extremely positive. The title for this product is Creative Problem Solving 101. For further information, see our web site.

Coming Soon. . . A new book by Scott G. Isaksen and Joe Tidd! The book, entitled "Meeting the Innovation Challenge: Leadership for Transformation and Growth" will be published by Wiley in early 2006. Watch your email for more news as it becomes available.

CPSB's CEO Scott Isaksen provided a keynote presentation at The World Knowledge Forum in Seoul, Korea. The theme of his forum presentation was, "Igniting Creative Potential: An Imperitive for Organizational Survival and Growth". While he was there, he was also invited to do a workshop for The Korean Educational Development Institute.

We upgraded a suite of training and application resources reflecting the insights from our work with clients and the need for user-friendly resources for practitioners within business organizations. Bill Shephard has completed a 20-month project to review and compile creativity tools that are available within our field. His study has identified in excess of 1,000 tools. We intend to use the insights from Bill's review and our client application experiences to refine our training resources.

Scott presented at the 9th European Conference on Creativity and Innovation: "Transformations" held in Lodz, Poland September 4 – 7, 2005. The title of Scott's presentation was, "Leadership's Role in Creating the Climate for Organizational Transformation". In addition to presentations on creativity, quality, and leadership the attendees learned a great deal about Poland and life in Poland following the Solidarity Movement twenty-five years ago. The ECCI X conference will be held in Copenhagen on October 14-17, 2007.

We improved our communication vehicles for sharing the results of research, development and services through our web site, print, and multi-media resources. A new DVD called "Meeting the Innovation Challenge" has been produced and includes the complete World Business Review TV segment, our corporate video, and two testimonials from corporate clients. Email cpsb@cpsb.com to receive a free copy.

Scott was recently invited to the Council of Scientific Society Presidents' Leadership Roundtable in Washington, DC, to present a summary of research and development on CPS to 70 presidents of the Nation's Scientific Associations.

CPSB has provided Senior Management meetings and workshops at some interesting locations. One program was held at Lion Sands Reserve in South Africa. This program integrated safaris with creative leadership. The second was a Senior Executive Team meeting in Sydney. The Harbor Bridge Climb was used as an excursion to enhance the meeting. Other programs have been held in Oxford and Paris.

Creativity Research Unit

The Creativity Research Unit (CRU) is the part of CPSB that creates new knowledge, information and insights by conducting studies of creativity and change with individuals, groups and organizations. The function of CRU is to maintain CPSB's product leadership, to fuel the development of new services and provide new knowledge to the academic study of creativity and change. Here are some of our recent publications:

Dorval, K. B., Isaksen, S. G., & Noller, R. B. (2003). Leadership for learning: Tips for effective mentoring and coaching. In K. McCluskey & A. M. Mays (Eds.), *Mentoring for talent development* (pp. 12-29). Sioux Falls, SD: Reclaiming Youth International.

Freeman, T. L., Isaksen, S. G., & Dorval, K. B. (2002). Servant-leadership and creativity. In L. Spears & M. Lawrence (Eds.), *Focus on Leadership: Servant-Leadership for the 21st Century* (pp. 256-267). NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Isaksen, S. G. (2002). Unleashing creative talent in organizations: Needed research and development. In A. G. Aleinikov (Ed.), *The future of creativity: The University of Georgia Dr. E. Paul Torrance Annual Lectures on Creativity* (pp. 67-81). Bensenville, IL: Scholastic Testing Service.

Isaksen, S. G. (2004). The progress and potential of the creativity level – style distinction: Implications for research and practice. In W. Haukedal, & B. Kuvaas (Ed.), *Creativity and Problem Solving in the Context of Business Management* (pp. 40-57). Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.

Isaksen, S. G. (2004). The level-style of creativity distinction: Comments on a recent comparison of two measures of creativity style. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 99, 223-224.

Isaksen, S. G., Babij, B., & Lauer, K. J. (2003). Cognitive styles in creative leadership practices: Exploring the relationship between level and style. *Psychological Reports*, 93, 983-994.

Isaksen, S. G. & Dorval, K. B. (2002). Guiding change: A systemic approach. In K. W. McCluskey & D. J. Treffinger, (Eds.), *Enriching teaching and learning for talent development* (pp. 33-39). Sarasota, FL: Center for Creative Learning.

Isaksen, S. G., Dorval, K. B., & Treffinger, D. J. (2003). *Résoudre les problèmes par la créativité: La méthode CPS*. Paris: Éditions d'Organisation. (French translation of *Creative Approaches to Problem Solving*)

Isaksen, S. G. & Gaulin, J. P. (2005). A re-examination of brainstorming research: Implications for research and practice. *The Gifted Child Quarterly*, 49, 319-329

Isaksen, S. G. & Lauer, K. J. (2002). The climate for creativity and change in teams. *Creativity and Innovation Management Journal*, 11, 74-86.

Isaksen, S. G., Lauer, K. J., & Wilson, G. V. (2003). An examination of the relationship between personality type and cognitive style. *Creativity Research Journal*, 15 (4), 343-354.

Isaksen, S. G. & Treffinger, D. T. (2004). Celebrating 50 years of reflective practice: Versions of creative problem solving. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 38, 75-101.

McCluskey, K. W., Katz, H., Bergsgaard, M., & Isaksen, S. G. (2002). Empathy, pedagogy, or efficiency: What really matters in education? In K. W. McCluskey & D. J. Treffinger, (Eds.), *Enriching teaching and learning for talent development* (pp. 57-63). Sarasota, FL: Center for Creative Learning.

Selby, E. C., Treffinger, D. J., Isaksen, S. G., & Lauer, K. J. (2002). VIEW: An assessment of problem solving style now available. *Creative Learning Today*, 11, 1-8.

Selby, E. C., Treffinger, D. J., Isaksen, S. G., & Lauer, K. J. (2002). VIEW: An assessment of problem solving style: Technical and user's guide. Sarasota, FL: Center for Creative Learning.

Selby, E. C., Treffinger, D. J., Isaksen, S. G., & Lauer, K. J. (2004). Defining and assessing problem-solving style: Design and development of a new tool. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 38, 221-243.

Treffinger, D. J., & Isaksen, S. G. (2005). *Creative Problem Solving: History, Development, and Implications for Gifted Education and Talent development*. The Gifted Child Quarterly, 49, 342-353.

Works underway

Isaksen, S. G. (In Press). Cross cultural implications for creative problem solving. A chapter to be included in B. Jöstingmeier & H-J. Boeddrich (Eds.), *The Proceedings of the 8th European Conference on Creativity and Innovation*. Deutsche Universitäts Verlag.

Treffinger, D. J., Isaksen, S. G., Stead-Dorval, B. (In Press). *Creative Problem Solving: An introduction* (4th ed.). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Isaksen, S. G., Ekvall, G., Wilson, G.V. & Gaulin, J.P. (In preparation). *Assessing the climate for creativity: A technical manual for the CCQ and SOQ*. Buffalo, New York: The Creative Problem Solving Group

Isaksen, S. G. & Tidd, J. (In preparation). *Meeting the Innovation Challenge: Leadership for Transformation and Growth*. A book to be published by Wiley.

Igniting Creative Potential™ Focusing the Power to Change

This three-day course combines our Foundations of CPS™ and CPS Facilitator Development™ workshops. As a result of completing the Igniting Creative Potential™ course, you learn a system for change – including easy-to-use tools, a flexible framework, and powerful language. You will practice getting the most from the CPS system. You will actually facilitate groups in creatively solving real problems and receive coaching from our world-class team of trainers. You leave ready to ignite the creative potential within your colleagues, project teams, and other work groups within your organization.

“We were able to take our customer retention from 3% to 68% in four months using the facilitative leadership skills provided by CPSB.”

*- Samantha Stead,
Editorial Director
International Masters Publishers, Inc.*

The first day of the workshop provides you a comprehensive look into the CPS system of tools, framework, and language. It explains the process for change, your personal approach to managing it, and reasons why people may APPEAR to resist it.

“It's great to finally have some solid tools to use for jump-starting the creative process.”

*- Jim Webster
Webster Design Group*

Prework (CPS 101 DL)

- Definitions of Creativity and Innovation
- A Framework for Approaching Creativity
- Characteristics of the Creative Product
- Characteristics and Styles of Creative People
- Dimensions of a Creative Environment
- Guidelines and Tools for Creative Problem Solving

The System for Change

Day One

- Exploring Your Personal Creative Process
- Introduction to Facilitating CPS
- Styles of Creativity and Change
- The Heartbeat of CPS
- CPS Language and Tools
- Managing Reactions to Novelty
- Understanding the Challenge
- Generating Ideas

Do YOU want to...

- Become significantly more productive at home or work?
- Know how the creative process works?
- Improve your approach to decision making and problem solving?
- Learn why you respond to change the way you do?
- Expand your toolbox?

Walk away with skills to:

- Use 10 tools for creative thinking & problem solving
- Shift from impossibility thinking to possibility thinking
- Construct solutions out of your biggest challenges and opportunities
- Generate new & targeted ideas for your problems
- Develop clarity about your priorities & evaluate the potential of your solutions
- Build buy-in & acceptance for your ideas

“Last week was a phenomenal experience. One of the best learning experiences of my life. In a discussion during our return travels, we agreed that this learning experience far exceeded our expectations (which were very high). Please extend our thanks to all those involved in making last week possible!”

*- Christopher Goodrich
Industrial Designer
Datex-Ohmeda*

Day two and three of the workshop prepares you for using the CPS system to ignite the creative potential of individuals, groups, and teams. It builds on the prerequisite Foundations of CPS™ Workshop. You receive feedback and coaching while learning and practicing seven core facilitation skills.

Releasing Group Power

Day Two

- Preparing for Action
- CPS Language and Tools
- Choosing Tools Model
- CPS Teachback Activity
- Planning Your Approach to CPS
- Managing Clients and Groups

Day Three

- Practice CPS Facilitation
- Coaching & Feedback Sessions
- Planning to Use Your Skills
- Taking CPS Facilitation Forward

Do YOU want to...

- Double the productivity of your project team?
- Cut your meeting time in half while doubling productivity?
- Reduce the time and cost of your new product and service development while increasing quality?
- Coordinate your use of different change methods?

Walk away with skills to:

- Scope the magnitude of change needed
- Design a targeted and flexible process for making change happen successfully
- Plan sessions that accomplish extraordinary results
- Use a powerful framework and tools to increase the speed of decision making and problem solving
- More effectively manage group dynamics

"This learning experience/ session has been the most useful and pragmatic of any I have attended. It will help enable me to add value to my clients and grow my business in a more creative and fulfilling direction."

*- Myra Summers
Focus Forward, Inc.*

“Thanks again for an amazing week. In all of the jillions of seminars and classes I’ve attended throughout my career, nobody comes close to you for effectiveness, thoroughness, professionalism, and of course, entertainment!”

*-Michelle Taufman
Doyle Research Associates*

Registration

Yes! I am serious about enhancing my creativity and would like to attend Igniting Creative Potential™.

To register call the CPSB office, 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday, at (716) 667-1324. Registrations will also be taken via Email at cpsb@cpsb.com.

The course is typically held at our office or at an area hotel. Course location will be given after your registration is received.

Participant:	
Name:	
Title:	
Organization:	
Address:	
City:	State/Province:
Postal Code:	Country:
Phone:	Fax:
Email:	

I would like to reserve a space on the following course (please check one or more):

Igniting Creative Potential \$1,850.00

- May 9-11, 2006
- October 10-12, 2006

Besides regularly scheduled ICP Courses, we also provide ICP Courses on demand to meet your special business needs. These customized on demand courses can be conducted in your company or at our facilities. For more information on ICP on demand, please call us at (716) 667-1324 or email us at cpsb@cpsb.com.

Payment Policies

Fees are due no later than 15 days before the course. Registration is confirmed upon receipt of payment. Fees are fully refundable if cancellation is made at least 7 days prior to the course. Thereafter, 75% is refundable. Transfers and substitutions may be made up to 5 days prior to the course.

Payment Information:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Registration fee enclosed <input type="checkbox"/> Invoice my organization <input type="checkbox"/> Invoice me	
<input type="checkbox"/> Charge my: <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> Mastercard <input type="checkbox"/> AMEX	
Card Number:	Expiration Date:
Signature:	

Enrollment is limited. Register today. Questions? Call (716) 667-1324.
 Send the completed form along with your payment information to:
 CPSB, 6 Grand View Trail, PO Box 648
 Orchard Park, New York 14127 USA

Comments on Positive Thinking

By István Magyari-Beck

Editor's Note: Istvan's thoughts were originally received in early 2003. We regret the delay in publishing them until now.

The other day as I was reading the Communiqué Volume 12 I found a nice cartoon sketch (p. 21) where “Creativity” and “Negativity” were fencing “to the death” (see Wilson & Lauer, 2001). Enjoying the witty drawing, I began to wonder: is it really possible that creativity or negativity could kill the other? It is beyond doubt, that in today’s understanding, creativity and negativity are enemies. On the other hand, it is also evident that they do stimulate each other. The presence – or even the possibility – of negativity gives rise to creativity. Likewise the “job” of negativity is nothing less than to attack the already established – sometimes obsolete – creative results. Will the one’s victory over the other be a plain suicide of the winner? If it is, then we need a fuller understanding of creativity (“large creativity”) based on the mutual fight and mutual support of the “narrow” creativity and negativity.

What will this theory of creativity look like? One of the pathways to it can be to redraw the cartoon sketch and make “positivity” (narrow creativity) fence “negativity”. Thus, the acceptance of the self-contradictory nature of creativity can be escaped. Although creativity, to me, can be a self-contradictory concept in itself, it seems nevertheless to be a better solution to stick to a coherent and consequent notion of creativity as long as we can. In this case, negativity has a certain place – not outside but – within the theory and practice (e.g. via the creative techniques) of creativity. Negativity within the scope of creativity can be treated in such a manner, which leads to a certain domestication of the dangerous phenomena of wild negativity. If positivity and negativity are two subconcepts of creativity then no matter to what extent the two subphenomena are fighting, creativity is the level of their reconciliation.

The key problem to be solved is related to the phenomenon and notion of positive thinking. Let us see first what sort of understanding of creativity prevails in this historic period. During my work in the domain of creativity, I came to the conclusion that creativity for most of the specialists in the field is the ‘supply of problem-solving ideas by individual human beings’. This is basically an economic definition of creativity, which reflects the general way of reasoning in our economic era. Now, the question arises: Where are the sources

of demand for ideas? One of the most likely answers will point at the leadership and management at work. Evidently, the market model came in and invaded the domain successfully. I welcome this victory since we got an excellent starting point for creative studies. Namely, an elegant and simple case of creative contributions which can be studied more easily than the more complicated levels of the same nature.

However, in real life situations, it is frequently the case that the problem solver and the problem owner is the same person, the same group, the same organization or the same culture or civilization – to mention just those most important levels on which Creatology (Magyari-Beck, 1999) deals with the phenomena of creativity. Hans Selye – who was a Hungarian born Canadian physiologist, the discoverer of the stress, – put a special emphasis on the problem side of creative activity. He maintained that two types of creative activity are at work: Problem-finding and Solution-finding. Terms identical to those of CPS (Isaksen, 1989). Moreover, in Selye’s opinion to find new problems requires a much higher level of creativity than to solve them (Selye, 1967). Is it possible that, in the future, we shall speak of “negative creativity” meaning the product, process and ability of problem statements? *Defining the lack of something?* Needless to say, this will not be a wild and destructive form of behavior.

In order to illuminate in a better way the above train of thought, let us redefine creativity in a more comprehensive manner than the economic approach did. *In Creatology, creativity is any sort and any level of problem solving. That is we have only creative problem solvings: some solutions are more creative, some moderately creative and some less creative. It is the stereotypes, which fall outside the scope of creativity.* We can roughly divide all our problems into two main classes: 1. Problems, which we are aware of and 2. Problems, which we are not aware of. The problems of the first class can be called conscious problems, whereas the problems of the second class are unconscious – preconscious and subconscious – problems. Some authors preferred to define creativity following this line of division. They speak of the differences between problem solving and creative activity or behavior (Roe, 1976). In the literature, we can also read about approaches, which try to be more sophisticated in treating this question (Isaksen, 1994).

In Creatology, creativity is any sort and any level of problem solving

It is comparatively easy to discover identity between the economic term of creativity reducing the latter to positive idea supply on one hand and the reduced understanding of creativity as solution of unconscious problems on the other hand. Why? Because if we as human beings are not aware of the problems we are actually solving – the case frequently discussed in psychoanalysis – the only possibility for us will be to generate a lot of ideas, without being able to evaluate them vis-à-vis our problems. Briefly speaking, we shall continue an endless idea generation on the basis of our unconscious problems. Those people are highly creative for this “neo-orthodox” view of creativity who give a large idea supply. Now, it becomes clear that the problem base of these people contains mostly unconscious problems. Can we say – using a metaphor – that groups, organizations and even cultures and civilizations usually batten on this kind of person?



The answer is not necessarily “yes”. Social metasystems sometimes use unconscious problems as energy sources for solving the problems entirely different from the solvers’ ones. By the way, this was exactly the meaning behind the Freudian term: sublimation, too. In fact, the neo-orthodox view of creativity rests on the basic conception common with that of Freud. In other cases, artists, scholars and experts at different fields of practice are themselves the problem generators. Here, the problem solver formulates the problems to be solved. How can we characterize the work of this person from the point of view of positive thinking? Is he or she destructive when outlining a gap in our knowledge, discovering the lack of ways to certain ends, or trying to give a better answer to an old question?

The answer is definitely “no”. To support this view, it first would be useful to briefly fix here the most important logical relationships between the affirmation and rejection. If one affirms something either theoretically or in practice, he or she also rejects those statements or actions, which are outside the affirmative statement or action, and vice versa. For example, Charles F. Kettering, in 1911, invented “the first battery ignition system which eliminated the need to start a car using a hand crank” (Wilson and Lauer, 2001. p.21). Now, what came first to Kettering’s mind? The battery ignition system (solution) to replace the old hand crank (problem) or the need for replacing the old hand crank (problem) by something more suitable (solution)? In the first case affirmation led to rejection,

in the second case rejection led to affirmation. After expressing these options in terms of positivity and negativity, it is easy to see that both of them took part in the process.

Destructive negativity is that kind of problem statement which takes place outside the complex creative process and, thus, has nothing to do with the problem solving activity. Negativity, which is involved in complex creative problem solving, ceases to be a wild and destructive negativity and

becomes a part of a constructive creative process. This gives a guideline of how to make constructive that which appeared at first as destructive: this puts him or her in the process of creative problem solving!

The last question is: What is or can be the main *theoretical* (not the moral) function of the term “positive thinking” in contemporary creative studies? To express ourselves in a very concise

way, the concept and imperative of “be(ing) positive” in our creative behavior manifests the specific feature of the “narrow creativity” beneath the umbrella of the “large creativity”. While the first sort of creativity deals mainly with the already formulated problems to be solved, the second sort, that is the “large creativity”, generates the problems as well. In order to exist, the “narrow creativity” presupposes the creativity of leaders and managers etc. at work in organizations who are active in formulating the problems. On the other hand, the people of “large creativity” do not need an instruction of being “positive”, as positive thinking is a necessary part of their intellectual activity and its practical counterpart.

On the basis of the afore said, it is also self-evident that we – in the framework of “large creativity” – have not only one sort of “narrow creativity”. The creativity, which manifests itself in problem-finding, can also be called “narrow creativity”. Let’s put it this way: We have “narrow creativity, number 1” as an opposite to “narrow creativity, number 2”. While “narrow creativity, number 1” is identical with the process of solution generation to the already formulated problem(s), “narrow creativity, number 2” is identical with the process of problem generation, either for making use of the already given new positive options, or for their creating anew. Either “narrow creativity, number 1” or “narrow creativity, number 2” alone is one-sided and weak. As we cannot speak of solutions without problems and problems without solutions, neither of these alone can function as a form of creativity.

A problem statement alone is a mere wild and destructive negativity.

Results of the above train of thought perhaps should not be new for the practitioners in the field of creativity. The Creative Problem Solving (CPS) technique has at the very least three remarkable steps especially important from the point of view of “large creativity”. Their names are: “Mess-Finding”, “Data-Finding” and “Problem-Finding” (Isaksen, 1994). To apply Herbet Simon’s (1977) terminology: all these steps are those of the problem statement. However, in the course of “Mess-Finding” we primarily formulate ill structured problems for the process of CPS. In the course of “Problem-Finding” – the better structured problems or directly well structured problems were formulated through the “Data-Finding”. That is, we use both “narrow creativity, number 2” and of course “large creativity” in the practice of creative techniques. On a theoretical level, however, the clear acknowledgement of this state of affairs is still lacking. This short

paper can perhaps be one of those enterprises in the domain of creative studies, which helps to find a theoretical place of problem statements within the theory of creativity.

References & Readings

Isaksen, S. G. (1989) *Kreativitáskutatás. Egy kialakulóban lévő tudományág perspektívái.* Transl. Tibor Varga. In. I. Magyar Beck (Szerk.). *A kreativitáskutatás új útjai. Tanulmánykötet.* Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Kutatás és Szervezetelemző Intézete, Budapest, 1989. Pp.21-39.

Isaksen, S. G. (1994) CPS: Linking Creativity and Problem Solving. A Chapter to be included in T. Helstrup, G. Kaufmann and K. H. Teigen (Eds.). *Problem solving and cognitive processes.* London: Kingsley Publishing. Version 4.0: November 16, 1994.

Magyar-Beck, I. (1999) Creatology. In M. A. Runco and S. R. Pritzker, (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of Creativity.* Academic Press, San Diego, London, Boston, New York, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, Pp.433-441.

Roe, A. (1976) Psychological Approaches to Creativity in Science. In A. Rothenberg and C. R. Hausman, (Eds.). *The Creativity Question.* Duke University Press, Durham, N.C. Pp.165-175.

Selye, H. (1967) *In Vivo. The Case for Supramolecular Biology.* Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York.

Simon, H. A. (1977) The Structure of Ill-Structured Problems. In H. A. Simon, *Models of Discovery and Other Topics in the Methods of Science.* D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, Holland, Pp.304-325.

Wilson, G. and Lauer, K. (2001) Lessons from Boss Ket! *Communiqué.* The Creative Problem Solving Group- Buffalo, Volume XII, Fall 2001. Pp.20-25.



Author Information

István Magyar-Beck is a full Professor of economic psychology at the Budapest University of Economic Sciences and Public Administration. Initiator of Creatology in the 1977 paper “About the Necessity of Complex Creatology” presented at The International Conference of Sociology of Science, in Budapest. He teaches: Creativity and innovation, economic psychology, personology, pedagogical axiology, the marketing of art and creatology. István was the Alex F. Osborn Visiting Professor at Buffalo State College in 1991. He is married with one daughter and lives in Budapest. Istvan enjoys gardening and swimming.

Riding the “Millennium Bang” through the SOQ and “Hits”

By Guido Prato Previde & Roberta Prato Previde

How does one communicate the results of a climate questionnaire to a group of over 100 people representing the organization that completed it? Can a consultant do it in a manner that promotes dialogue, shared understanding and concrete action plans? These were the questions and challenges facing me and my firm recently. In this article I’d like to explore how I dealt with these questions in a highly successful manner.

This article is aimed at outlining the practical application of the SOQ (Situational Outlook Questionnaire) in a project we worked on for our client. We especially want to explore the innovative approach we used to design and deliver the results in a large group session with the client. This work is part of the research initiative we are conducting to support the Italian validation of the SOQ.

Background Information

The client was the Italian affiliate of a young and creative multi-national television network company striving to maintain its creative edge and leadership in their industry sector. The affiliate had already come a long way, but was striving to achieve an even more successful future. During the appraising task meeting it was clear to us that, although very animated and trustful, the client was passing through an eventful phase filled with a great deal of uncertainty about the future.

The affiliate’s annual meeting, in fact, occurred at the end of a stressful year. The very existence of the company had been threatened by a change in the law governing the industry. In spite of the challenges faced during the year, the results were productive and exciting! Therefore, according to the Managing Director, the meeting was a crucial occasion in which to meet with all the employees to share information about the company’s strategy and to make plans to achieve it. Now was a perfect time for “Idea Time” and to set up a two-way communication system among the departments that would take precedence over the frantic daily activities.

The Managing Director asked our company to solve a major issue related to the organizational development of this creative company. The issue was “How to understand the current feelings of the employees and share the strategy for the future during the annual meeting?” We were to do this at the annual meeting in a three-hour time span.

The original idea we had to address this challenge was to use the SOQ as an empirical tool to gauge some of the feelings of the employees. Our experience with the questionnaire in the past had been very productive and in small group settings we knew that we could use the results from the SOQ to facilitate productive dialogues and debates for our clients’ employees. In this sense, the SOQ seemed to be the right tool to use, because of its validity and ability to create a forum for meaningful communication. Now the problem we needed to address was how would this lead into the strategy sharing that the Managing Director wanted to provide to the employees. Also how could we obtain their commitment to the strategy?

Our thought was that we could do this in the three-hour window we were provided if we could engage as a team to support activities in the project. With this support we knew we could break the larger group into smaller sub-groups that could discuss the results of the SOQ. Then, as a team, we could use our talents to make sure that the issue of strategy in the organization would come to the surface of the discussions in

a natural fashion. This would provide the segway needed to allow the Managing Director to put forward the new strategy and for us to then break into small groups, discuss the strategy and how it connected to the climate results discussed earlier. The results of these discussions could then be shared with the total group and we could help the group come to a common understanding of the strategy and what it would take for them to achieve it.

It was also clear that the time we had available for the overall meeting was short and it would be difficult to meet the objec-

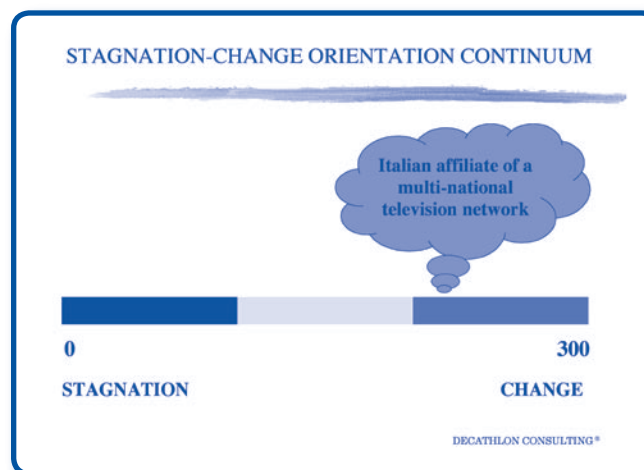


Figure 1

tive of the Managing Director. This had to occur after lunch since the morning of the annual meeting was entirely dedicated to general management and functional presentations.

Therefore Decathlon Consulting's three-hour session, during the meeting, had the following objectives:

1. Supporting the group's current development by enhancing the awareness of the situational outlook concerning creative strengths, possible weaknesses and suggested improvements.
2. Facilitating the flow of information among the different departments of the organization regarding critical issues.

The starting point, we agreed with the client, had to be a full-color picture representative of the situational outlook taken by those who live it everyday. Therefore, the 100 meeting attendees were invited to complete the SOQ, in their departments several weeks before the meeting.

Method

The tool used was the SOQ (Situational Outlook Questionnaire), developed by the Creative Problem Solving Group, Inc. (CPSB) based upon the work of Göran Ekvall. SOQ measures, in accordance with its underlying nine dimensions concept, the creative climate of a team, department, or organization. The authors of this article have translated and validated the SOQ into Italian. This reliable and valid questionnaire, under the authorization of CPSB, is used to map creative climate along a continuum ranging from Stagnation to Change-Orientation.

The SOQ was administered, processed, and scored two weeks before the meeting in order to have a big picture of the organization and smaller pictures related to each of the eight departments.

Let's take a look at how the meeting went, via the SOQ feedback and debriefing.

The Meeting

The Agenda of the afternoon meeting was:

- Plenary: Does creative climate exist? Why research with the SOQ? What are the general data? (30 min.)
- Group discussion: The organization and our department's picture: pros, cons, priorities (60 min.)
- Plenary: Group presentations of validated diagnosis and priorities (30 min.)
- Comments and summary by the General Director (20 min.)
- Bingo: You hit the bull's-eye! (10 min.)
- Conclusions and focus on plans (30 min.)

In plenary, Guido Prato Previde outlined in a conversational and informal way what creative climate is and how it can be measured with the SOQ. It was a quick and easy-going presentation in accordance with the culture and expectations of the group. Moreover, the organizational results had been illustrated by showing the "kaleidoscope of the departments" (see below for a novel way of presenting results). That means that the opening presentation of organizational results did not contain any numbers, but only colors which had been assigned in accordance with the degree of Change-Orientation versus Stagnation.

The people split up into six groups, which were heterogeneous, but with a greater representation of a given department. The aim of this session was to validate and comment on the "big picture", and to analyze the more specific picture of that department.

Each group worked with the facilitator on the following activities:

1. Guessing the organization's positioning (a precise number) along the continuum by writing the score on a Post-it® along with some reasons why that score was chosen.
2. By focusing on the departmental target, participants were asked to validate results, which were given back by the facilitator.
3. Participants selected the most critical factors, which hindered creativity in the department (answers to qualitative question #2 of the SOQ). The vote was made using the "Hits" technique, where dots of different color were assigned by those internal or external to the department.
4. Then, after sharing the results of previous voting, participants used the same technique to vote on the most important actions to be implemented in order to overcome the previously identified hurdles. This time, dots were of the same color because we wanted to focus on major issues. Those who wanted to add other suggestions were allowed to write them on a Post-it® and add it to a list.
5. Participants prepared overheads and speeches to make their presentations in front of management and the other groups.

It must be remembered that, during the session facilitated by the authors and the team of Decathlon Consulting, the discussion of the data, department by department, was carried out within the small heterogeneous groups coordinated by a facilitator.

The following presentations, delivered by each of the subgroups in plenary, were an opportunity for debate among the departments and fostered dialogue with the General Director.

The Outcome

Results showed that the overall organization was highly change-oriented. Indeed at the organizational level, all dimensions were painted in green! The positioning along the continuum Stagnation Change-Orientation is illustrated in Table 1.

SOQ Dimensions	Mean		Range	Change		
	Overall	Dev. Standard		Oriented	Average	Stagnant
Challenge and Involvement	246	26	195-286	238	190	163
Freedom	187	17	165-207	210	174	153
Trust	187	46	120-260	178	160	128
Idea Time	127	31	89-183	148	111	97
Playfulness/Humor	226	26	192-283	230	169	140
Conflict	51	39	3-128	78	88	140
Idea Support	187	39	139-260	183	164	108
Debate	198	34	133-267	158	128	105
Risk Taking	149	40	87-240	195	112	53

Table 1 shows the detailed results of the Organization.

Thus, at the organizational level, there are no dimensions of “suffering” (no red codes, or “bugs” as we like to call them). The only dimensions relatively “hot” (less change-oriented) at the organizational level were: Freedom, **Idea Time**, and **Risk-Taking**, where the organizational position is average (yellow).

Results, dimension by dimension, suggested the following considerations.

Challenge and Involvement is very high, the climate is dynamic, people feel self-actualized and therefore invest a lot of energy in their work. This high level of commitment spreads throughout the departments, as shown by a restricted range.

Also, **Trust** is high, people feel emotionally safe and therefore communication is generally open and direct (although this is not homogeneous in the different departments).

Playfulness/Humor. The climate is characterized by spontaneity and anti-conformism. People are likely to be at ease and to behave naturally; to laugh, tell jokes, and to enjoy working, which seems to be a common aspect throughout all departments.

The level of **Conflict** is very low. Despite a few interpersonal tensions, people are likely to respect one another (although not in every department).

Idea Support: People listen to one another and reciprocally encourage and support the undertaking of new initiatives in a constructive and supportive way.

Debate seemed to be at home in the organization. When people are enthusiastic about proposing their ideas, they are likely to constructively put into question their own (and others’) points of view. Whereas, dimensions such as **Idea Time**,

Freedom, and **Risk-Taking** are, at the organizational level, only intermediate.

Idea Time, the time dedicated to elaborating and developing new ideas, is not enough, although only intermediate. Meetings and occasions to exchange between professionals and departments are, according to participants, not enough, and in a few departments this dimension is even perceived at the stagnant level.

As far as **Freedom** is concerned, the discretionary power people might exert on their everyday duties is, although heterogeneous, overall intermediate.

Risk-Taking is perceived as average. People do not feel free to undertake audacious, although promising actions, in the face of uncertainty.

In a nutshell, most dimensions were considered hallmarks of excellence because they are in line with the business and future strategies of the organization. Among these dimensions are **Challenge and Involvement**, **Playfulness**, and **Debate**. The three dimensions that are more critical (although intermediate) in comparison to the overall situational outlook of the organization have been easily explained when embedded in the history of the organization, and related to the most recent events of a future-oriented organization.

All groups generally validated the results, defining the organization as young and dynamic. People are willing, both personally and professionally, to be part of a challenging adventure. On the one hand, enthusiasm, humor, openness towards debate, creativity, and flexibility are the key words and values recurring in group comments. Perceived weaknesses include: too much improvisation, the lack of idea time, too few meetings between departments, and an aversion to risk-taking.

Generally, when asked to guess the positioning of the organization along the continuum stagnation-change, all groups judged the organization as even more change-oriented than was shown by the analysis of the quantitative data. This means that the organizational creative climate is overestimated because of a lively and stimulating climate and because of the fulfillment of working preferences and expectations. Quite amazing was the fact that, regardless of the general uncertainty, scores given by the employees were more positive than those given by management. Troubles probably stressed the upper part of the organization more than the groups. More research on this issue would be worthwhile, in order to analyze situations where there are clear gaps between the management and the group.

The meeting results were very productive and rich in stimuli for debate and future projects. Groups liked the method very much and appreciated the way it all went along easily and

comprehensively. A bit of fancy and an air of expectation was created by the Bingo. Before final comments from the Director, we calculated the total score of the organization along the nine dimensions. The group that came closest to the actual score was celebrated as the best (or luckiest!). The Director was happy because he had the opportunity to talk with his people in an easygoing way about crucial points. Moreover, many ideas and options for further implementation emerged.

Tips and Major Changes in Presenting Results

It might be useful now to reflect on some novelty that characterized the use and application of the SOQ. These are unique and might be helpful for practitioners in this field.

1. A chart, named “Kaleidoscope of the Departments” was distributed to groups where results, dimension by dimension, for each department, were presented. They were shown without any numbers, but with different color codes. This was derived from an idea introduced in 1999 by the team “Decathlon” when presenting data to the client for feedback. It simply attributes to the normative data (the three organizational categories devised on the basis of their productivity and climate) different color codes to facilitate visual recognition. The color codes are green, yellow, and red, respectively for the categories change-oriented, average, and stagnant. On this occasion, the color code was the substitute for the mean score, in order to avoid comparison between departments.
2. Another change, which has been introduced for the benefit of the meeting, was to “mirror” the theoretical range from 0-300 on a continuum, where each hundred (1-100, 101-200, 201-300) was painted with one of the three color codes. Usually we showed the position of the given group or organization on the continuum (calculated by summing up the means for each dimension, except for conflict that is subtracted, and by dividing the sum of the means by 9, the number of dimensions.) In this case, participants had to guess the positioning of their organization along the continuum (see Bingo).
3. The SOQ consists of 53 closed questions (Part A) and three qualitative or open questions (Questions 1, 2, and 3). The answers to these qualitative questions are a rich source of information about the way in which a given reality is managed, and sheds light on the most critical issues both relational and organizational. For this occasion, we made

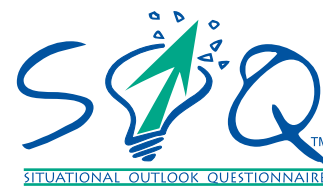
large photocopies of the transcriptions of participants’ answers to questions 2 and 3, which were used in group discussions. The underlying rationale was that the answers to question 3 suggested the actions to be implemented to overcome the hurdles expressed in answers to question 2. Nothing new in itself, except the fact of visualizing for each group, in a large size, problems and solutions giving to them (with the help of the CPSB tool “hits”) the assignment to share the diagnosis and to choose actions to correct the present situation!

Last, but not least, we have tested that in our country the correct phrasing for the two poles of the creative climate continuum is “Change-Orientation” (instead of “Innovation”) versus “Stagnation.” This also means that we avoid any confusion about different types of creativity while we are looking at a measure for change.

Author Information

Guido is President and Director of Research of Decathlon Consulting, the Italian affiliate of CPSB. He is consulting with clients in order to facilitate the management of change and creativity, by designing and delivering interventions for private companies and institutions. He is the author of the Italian validation of the SOQ.

Since 1993 Roberta has been working with Decathlon Consulting. As a consultant she has been involved in different teambuilding and training programs. She co-authored the Italian validation of the SOQ and as Decathlon’s Research Assistant she manages the Italian database.



Progress on VIEW: An Assessment of Problem Solving Style

By Scott Isaksen

VIEW: An Assessment of Problem Solving Style is an easy-to-use tool for improving the understanding and appreciation of different preferences related to Creative Problem Solving (CPS) for improved teamwork, communication and learning. Although we designed VIEW to be a very practical and useful tool, we are also committed to ensuring that it is conceptually and psychometrically sound (Selby, Treffinger, Isaksen & Lauer, 2004).

The origins of our work on VIEW stems from 25 years of collaborative research and development surrounding the Cognitive Styles Project. This project was initiated in 1982 to help us better understand what CPS tools and approaches work best for whom and under what circumstances (Isaksen, 1987/2004).

Since its launch in 2002, VIEW has a growing number of qualified users, has been successfully distributed through print and on-line access, and now has a technical manual as well as a practical facilitator's guide. VIEW has already been

successfully translated to Dutch and French, and more translation projects are underway.

Those of us using VIEW have found it to be a very powerful resource to help leadership teams, project teams, and others learning and applying CPS.

Numerous Advanced Qualification courses have been held in various locations (London, Oxford, Sarasota, New York, Buffalo, Brussels, and Washington D.C.) and a special event is planned for January, 2006.

References & Readings

Selby, E. C., Treffinger, D. J., Isaksen, S. G., & Lauer, K. J. (2004). VIEW An Assessment of Creative Problem Solving Style – Technical Manual. Sarasota, FL: Center for Creative Learning.

Selby, E. C., Treffinger, D. J., Isaksen, S. G., & Lauer, K. J. (2004). VIEW: An assessment of Creative Problem Solving Style – Facilitator Guide. Sarasota, FL: Center of Creative Learning.

Selby, E. C., Treffinger, D. J., Isaksen, S. G., & Lauer, K. J. (2004). Defining and assessing problem-solving style: Design and development of a new tool. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 38, 221-243.

Isaksen, S. G. (2004). The progress and potential of the creativity level – style distinction: Implications for research and practice. In W. Haukedal, & B. Kuvaas (Ed.). *Creativity and Problem Solving in the Context of Business Management* (pp. 40-57). Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.

Isaksen, S. G. (Ed.). (1987) *Frontiers of Creativity Research: Beyond the Basics*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Bearly Limited.

VIEW Advanced Qualification Course

January 4 & 5

VIEW Users Networking Conference

January 5, 6, 7

For more information contact:

Don Treffinger < don@creativelearning.com >

Marves Isaksen < marves@cpsb.com >

The Creative Problem Solving Group, Inc. (CPSB) offers a variety of customized programs, products, and services as a seasoned research and development organization. We use our approach to the Creative Problem Solving Process as a flexible method for helping people transform ideas into action.

CPSB's flexibility links powerful people to powerful situations for the promotion of learning about and applying Creative Problem Solving (CPS). It does this in order to empower individuals to improve their understanding and use of their creative talents. CPSB works to promote synergy, the productive use of diversity, and teamwork within groups. By enhancing the productive use of creative human talent, the focus is helping people contribute in meaningful ways in their workplace as well as to other people and organizations.

1984 - 2004

Total number of programs: 1225

Total number of participants: 46,968

Average number of programs each year.... 61

Average program evaluation score 4.73
(1-5 scale)



About the Communiqué

The Communiqué is an informal newsletter published by CPSB. It is designed to highlight and share key information about our current developments, research, and program activities.

Corporate Headquarters

6 Grand View Trail
P.O. Box 648
Orchard Park, New York 14127
Phone: (716) 667-1324
Fax: (716) 667-6070
Email: cpsb@cpsb.com
Web Site: www.cpsb.com

CPSB Headquarters

Scott G. Isaksen
Chief Executive Officer

Marves M. Isaksen
Vice President of Finance & Administration

William J. Shephard
Vice President Group Services

Jesse J. Bergeron
Manager of Research and Design

Kristin Isaksen
General Assistant



ISSN: 1089-3970

© The Creative Problem Solving Group, Inc., 2005.
All Rights Reserved.

The Communiqué is a publication of CPSB and is copyrighted. However, please make copies of any of its contents for your use in sharing information or networking, just cite the source. Thank you!



PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

PERMIT No. 3562
BUFFALO, NY

CPSB

The Creative Problem Solving Group, Inc.

6 Grand View Trail, P.O. Box 648, Orchard Park, New York 14127

To help us provide the Communiqué to you in the future, please let us know your email address. Thank you!