

Developing Innovative Ideas.

SYNECTICS

Synectics is a problem-solving methodology that stimulates thought processes of which the subject may be unaware. This method was developed by George Prince and William J.J. Gordon in the Arthur D. Little Invention Design Unit in the 1950s. The name Synectics comes from the Greek and means 'the joining together of different and apparently irrelevant elements'.

One important element in creativity is embracing the seemingly irrelevant. Emotion is emphasized over intellect and the irrational over the rational. Through understanding the emotional and irrational elements of a problem or idea, a group can be more successful at solving a problem. Synectics is based on the systematic use of analogies for the generation of ideas. The process has nine steps:

STEP 1: Task Headline. Define the problem in the form 'How to...'

STEP 2: Task Analysis. Set out why the problem exists. Explain its background. Explain the opportunity and/or what you have already tried to do to address it. Explain what ideas you have thought of so far to try and solve it. If you have one, set out your 'ideal solution', so that later, you can see if there are ways to break down the barriers to achieving it.

STEP 3: Springboards. Make some provocative 'wish statements' and random ideas to set off creative thinking, like 'Why can't we...', 'If only we could...', 'One idea might be to...'

STEP 4: Selection. Select the most appealing ideas to emerge from the Springboard, to work on further. These may be picked because of their practicality, because they are visionary or just because they are interesting.

STEP 5: Ways and Means. Look for practical steps to develop the selected ideas, and ways you may be able to implement them.

STEP 6. Emerging Idea. Allow one idea to emerge as the strongest possible solution.

STEP 7: Itemised Response. Evaluate the Idea that emerged, looking for ideas for how to make it work until you identify the best way forward. Test out the groups satisfaction with the idea/implementation package, asking them whether it is a possible solution? If it is not, return to Step 6 and work with a new emerging Idea.

STEP 8: Possible Solution. State and document the possible solution and the associated implementation approaches.

STEP 9: Next Step. Document the actions to be taken, by whom and to what deadlines.

There is a host of valuable creative problem solving resources on the Synectics World website (<http://synecticsworld.com/>).