

SEEK CREATIVE SPARKS FROM UNCONVENTIONAL SOURCES

When it comes to generating new ideas and new ways to do things, we can sometimes fall into the rut of holding a generic brainstorming session, looking at competitors in your industry to copy or looking at "best in class" for your functional area (e.g. Finance, IT or industry like government or retail.)

Many times these generic approaches lead to either the same stale, tired ideas or ones that are only incrementally different than what you are doing now.

In order to significantly "shake and jolt" conventional thinking, you have to think unconventionally (what a concept!) One way to do this is through a technique I call the "Best in the World" technique.

Instead of looking inside your industry or function, ask yourself the question. "Who's best in the world at _____?"

For example, if you are trying to improve cycle times ask yourself, "Who's best in the world at cycle times?" One company did this and came up with an unconventional answer that made perfect sense. Their answer was a NASCAR pit crew. The rationale was, "Who else can get that much done in less than 20 seconds?" Hard to argue with that!

This company sent out a team to study a NASCAR pit crew to observe how and why they did the things they do. How, in less than 20 seconds, they could meet their objectives of completing standard routines with and on the fly adjustments with no wasted movement or energy and at a very high quality standard.

The team came back to the office with all sorts of amazing ideas on how to reduce cycle times in their operations and after applying their new creative ideas, they were able to reduce cycle times by over 60% AND improve quality.

Be creative when using the "Best in the World" technique. If you are having problems with communications (email, reports etc.) being too long, boring and ineffective; ask yourself, "Who is best in the world at short communications that 'pack a punch'?"

How about your local evening news anchors? Spend some time learning how they develop headlines and then take large amounts of information and

consolidate them down to only the things that matter while fitting them into a broadcast. I guarantee you will walk away with some great ideas on how to shorten and improve the effectiveness of your communications.

Team unity issues? Why not study a Navy SEALs team?

Trouble seeing the big picture? How about spending some time with an award-winning photographer or artist to see how they view things and to see how much you are missing?

There are no limits to the creative sparks you can generate if you start thinking differently about where those sparks can originate. Try the "Best in the World" technique with your team and let us know what amazing things you come up with!