

A whack on the side of the head – paper



Creativity can be the source of fame and success, but tapping into this resource can be difficult for some. Some say that you are either born with or without creativity, while others argue that it is learned and absorbed throughout a person's lifetime. In either case, there has to be a trigger that can jump-start the creative process for those who are in need a creative spark. Roger von Oech's *A Whack on the Side of the Head* is a short book describing how to figuratively "whack" some creativity into people.

Roger von Oech states that there are ten mental blocks that hinder creativity, and sometimes, all people really need is a whack on the head to think differently and more clearly about their current situations. Members of society do not have a need to be creative for most of what they do, but for when people need to "think something different" these mental locks need to be identified and opened. Without unlocking the mind of its creative hindrances, new technologies and inventions would cease to exist.

Roger von Oech's book discusses the various techniques and tips to whack people's thinking, and tries to enlighten his readers with mentally stimulating puzzles and theories. *A Whack on the Side of the Head* is primarily sectioned into the ten mental locks that von Oech feels are forcing people to think "more of the same" in multiple situations. Each lock must be identified and overcome to progress toward a more creative and fulfilling lifestyle. The first mental lock is looking for the right answer. The educational system has taught us to always look for the single, correct answer.

This is acceptable in most academic situations, but the problem with applying this "one right answer" philosophy in real world applications is that people stop searching for answers once they have found one that works. There are

multiple solutions to problems, and just because one seems correct, it may not be the most correct. Looking for the second and third right answers can lead to more efficient and innovative production. The second mental lock is thinking that something isn't logical. There are two ways of thinking, hard and soft. Things with a hard side have one correct answer, while soft sided thinking has many correct answers.

Also, there are two main phases in the creative development of ideas. The first phase is the imaginative phase, where one generally plays with ideas and asks many " what if" and " what rules can I break" type questions. On the other hand, practical thinking evaluates and executes ideas by asking questions such as " what is the deadline" and " who can help us? " Soft thinking is quite effective in the imaginative phase when searching for new ideas, while hard thinking is best used during the practical phase when one is preparing to carry and idea into action.

Both thinking techniques should be used to produce more and better ideas, even when a certain style of thinking does not seem logical. The next creativity lock is always following the rules. Roger von Oech doesn't become cliché by saying " rules are meant to be broken" but he does insist that some rules should be challenged. In an ever-changing world, some rules are outdated and should adapt the appropriate, current way of living. For example, basketball used to have a jump ball after every basket. In 1938, after almost a half decade of basketball, this ruling finally was changed in order to make game play more continuous.

It just made sense to break and change this rule for so long, but no one ever suggested it. One should be flexible with the rules. Breaking and bending the

rules won't necessarily lead to creative ideas; it is one possibility. Many rules outlive the purpose to which they were intended, and thus should be occasionally challenged. Always being practical is an encumbrance to creativity. This world was built by practical people, but they knew when to unleash their creative side and achieve an imaginative frame of mind. The author proposes asking "what if?" questions throughout your day to try to spark some creativity. These questions can then be used as stepping stones towards a new idea, and although the questions will not always yield brilliance, they will surely make someone more productive. Another strange, yet effective, manner of being impractical is imagining yourself as the idea. Let's say, for example, that you are in charge of designing a new parking meter. You could ask questions such as "What does it feel like when my time has expired?" or "What would I look like if I took credit cards? These silly questions could actually initiate a completely new design of debit card system parking meters. Being impractical not only allows ourselves to think differently, but it can almost always lead to new ideas. Roger von Oech's fifth mental lock is thinking that play is frivolous, as well as pausing your mind. One must break free from their dull tactics and allow themselves to play with an idea. Having fun is one of the most positive motivators in the workplace and it is contagious, causing others around you to want to get in on the action.

By playing and having fun, one can rid any preconceived notions about the proper way to do things and truly direct productive and creative thinking towards a new idea. Along with fun, taking a break to let your mind unwind can be useful in trying to solve a problem. Many times, people will have a

problem on their mind all day but will never come up with a solution. Then on their drive home, while thinking about absolutely nothing, an idea, almost magically, pops into their head and they have their solution. Software developer Rick Tendy says, “ I never try to solve a problem by solving it. By putting your problem on the mental back burner, one can put the problem into perspective, it allows the seed of the problem to grow over time, and lastly, it allows a person to approach the same problem later with new assumptions and focus. The next creative lock is saying to yourself “ That’s not my area. ” One shouldn’t rely too heavily on specializations when creating an idea. When this happens, a person may not only delimit their problems to too small an area, they may also stop looking for ideas in other fields.

These people will stop searching for an answer because it is “ an administrative problem” or “ only a computer person would know this. ” One has to look outside their area of expertise to find solutions. For example, if you are an engineer with a problem, it might be beneficial to think of how an artist or a teacher would find a solution. By looking at a problem from different perspectives, a whole new realm of creativity can be unlocked. ADD MORE. Trying not to be foolish is major way to limit creativity and get stuck in a routine of being sensible with decisions.

Conforming to society may make people feel safe and secure, but not one single invention has come from this thinking. Someone has to be foolish, by either consulting a fool or being the fool themselves. Roger von Oech says that a fool keeps people from always thinking the same things. In other words, even though they may be a fool, they bring a new way of thinking

that is full of interesting and silly ideas. People must let their “stupid monitor” down and allow themselves to play with dumb ideas and see if they work. However, you must be prepared to laugh at yourself and not be worried about being embarrassed.

Just like having fear of being wrong, one can't expect to have silly ideas and most of them not work. The next creative mental lock is avoiding ambiguity. Creative minds think ambiguously and they let ideas be open to interpretation. Just because everyone has the same notions and ideas regarding a certain problem, doesn't mean that it is correct, or the most correct. Avoiding ambiguity is an especially good idea in practical situations where the consequences of misunderstanding would be serious. In imaginative situations, however, this manner of thinking stifles your imagination and ingenuity.

There is a place for ambiguity, perhaps not so much while evaluating and executing ideas, but certainly when you are searching for and playing with them. Another way to be ambiguous is to let an oracle decide, or in other words, use a random outside source. Let random, unexpected information stimulate your imaginations. Native American Indian medicine men used to let wet rawhide dry in the sun, and the resulting wrinkles in the leather would be their new hunting map where the wrinkles represented new trails for the hunters to follow.

Ambiguity was used to solve the Native Americans problem of diminishing game on their current hunting trails, and can be used today in the same manner. The next mental lock incorporates many other locks. This lock is thinking “to err is wrong” or that one must be correct all of the time to have

a positive result. You must be wrong to be creative. Inventors do not get things right the first, second, tenth, hundredth, and so on time. They may go years without finding the correct solution, but they are allowing narrowing in on the answer but allowing themselves to fail.

Thomas Edison said that he knew 1, 800 ways to “ not” make a light bulb. Christopher Columbus thought he was finding a shorter route to India. One of Madame Curie’s failures was radium. Failures give us an opportunity to try a new approach. Maybe you find a new way to “ not fail” which leads to a new idea. If you make an error, use it as a stepping stone to an idea you might have otherwise not discovered. As Woody Allen says, “ If you’re not failing every now and again, it’s a sign you’re not trying anything very innovative. ” The last lock is simply thinking that you are not creative.

If you want to be more creative, believe in the worth of your ideas, and have the persistence to continue building on them. With this type of attitude, you will be open to take more risks, learn how to fail, search for more than one answer, and occasionally break some rules. By giving yourself a creative license, you allow yourself to be silly, imaginative, and foolish even if that isn’t typically you. By applying all of the mental lock remedies, you will be on your way to a great idea, and by doing so, you will be able to whack yourself into creativity. ADD MORE.

Now once you have an idea, you must use it. Someone can be the most creative person in the world and have millions of terrific ideas, but if those ideas aren’t carried into fruition, it is almost pointless. People who are successful in the creative process can master four key roles to allow themselves to move from inception into deployment. Each of these four roles

embodies a different method of thinking. The first is the explorer who searches for new information and resources. The explorer pokes around in new areas and seeks out a variety of different information.

The next role is the artist, whose responsibilities are to turn these resources and information into new ideas. The artist follows their intuition, asks " what if? " questions, and breaks or creates rules of their own. The third role is the judge who evaluates the merits and validity of the idea. The judge runs risk analyses, questions assumptions, and listens to their gut. The judge ultimately makes a decision on the idea. The last role is the warrior, whose soleresponsibilityis to carry an idea into action. You must have the courage and desire to do what is necessary to make your idea a reality.

By mastering these roles, Roger von Oech says you will be a master of creativity. Roger von Oech has conducted creativity seminars with renowned companies such as CBS, Coca- Cola, GE, HP, and IBM to name a few. These companies all hired his services because they know of the true value of creativity throughout any phase of organizational behavior, individual, group, and organization. Organizational performance depends on individual performance from the entire work force. Hiring and molding creative workers is an excellent way to increase efficiency and boost morale in the office.

Managers seek creative individuals for two basic reasons. One, they bring fresh thoughts which lead to better productivity. Secondly, they are frequently much better workers as they are not solely preoccupied with results, but rather the steps involved in achieving these results. Anyone can find an answer once, but what truly makes creative individuals an asset to an organization is their desire to find multiple correct answers in any scenario.

Just as individuals are important, how groups of individuals collaborate with their creative minds and ideas is beneficial to any company.

Without a creative team of workers, a group would only be as strong and adaptive as its most intuitive member. For example, if a manager organizes a team of mostly uncreative workers, one can expect that this group will get its work done, but not offer any alternatives or advanced results. On the contrary, a group comprised of many creative minds will not only produce the desired results, they may in fact find better ways of solving problems and perhaps challenge rules to make the production more efficient.

With creative mental locks slowing down idea creation, it can be seen as imperative to mold individuals into creative workers. Lastly, the entire organization will benefit from its employees ridding themselves of these deterring mental locks. This creative behavior processes give life to an organization. An organization thrives on its ability to be adaptive to change, and its ability to create the changes themselves. Apple revolutionized the concept of digital media with their iPod, and it was due to creative individuals who had disregard for the way other companies were thinking.

This type of thinking is the mother of invention, which brings about a happy workforce, increased revenue, and job satisfaction. Improvements of individual, group, and organizational performance are an output of creative organizational behavioral changes and developments. This “whack in the head” thinking keeps the workplace from being monotonous and predictable, a characteristic that every organization hopes to avoid. In a society where companies race to put out the next best “tech toy,” it is crucial for any organization to heed Roger von Oech’s advice.

Not only must every level of the organization be creative, they must have the will and desire to carry out their ideas into action. Creativity is a resource that will be valuable forever. Those organizations that have it will continue to be innovative, while those without will be forgotten about. The future will basically be dictated by innovative minds, and their ability to carry out brilliant ideas. A Whack on the Side of the Head was written more than 25 years ago, but all of the information is timeless.

Organizational behavior has been, and always will be structured around the creative minds of the individuals, the camaraderie of the organization, and the overall effectiveness of the organization. Roger von Oech's book demonstrates an importance on creativity that is sought after by every organization. The study of organizational behavior is a careful application of how people in groups and individuals act within an organization. Although creativity is only a single characteristic of people, it may be one of the most valued when groups are systematically studied.

As stated before, the basic goal of any company is to take an idea or problem, and solve it with as little resources as possible. CEOs, program managers, and floor managers alike could all benefit from this book both for personal development and to help their employees unlocked their minds. There will always come a time in the workplace where an individual or group will get stuck on a problem that will result in a negative effect all around them. By being creative, employees will be stimulating their mind and playing with ideas which lead to higher office morale.

Interactions of workers is the whole principle behind organizational behavior, and more creative these workers are, the more positive and productive these

individuals will be within their groups. A Whack on the Side of the Head has several practical applications in the workplace. Upon reading the book, a manager can use the knowledge attained to help employees solve problems by pinpointing which mental lock they need to overcome. Furthermore, these managers will also know the remedies that are stifling their workers. This book is a simple, yet enjoyable, read that can be processed on many levels.

For the younger audience, this book is meant to create a future of limitless creativity by molding the mind. For the older, professional audience, this book retrains the mind to thinking differently and breaks old suffocating habits. WRITING STYLE. A Whack on the Side of the Head is a wonderful book for those looking to merely be more creative recreationally, or do so for the betterment of an organization. From an organizational behavior standpoint, Roger von Oech's work will improve interactions individually, within a group, and among an entire organization by allowing new and exciting ideas flow freely from these now unlocked brains.