

SHORT REPORT

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TOPIC

rethink Training and Mentoring Programme for Western Australian Small Business Owners and Managers delivered by the POWA Institute 2007-2008.

Participant feedback on the value of using Dr Edward de Bono's thinking tools:

- Six Thinking Hats® and Parallel Thinking®
- Power of Perception™ thinking tools (formally known as Direct Attention Thinking Tools™ - DATT™)
- Lateral Thinking

FURTHER INFORMATION

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In 2006 the Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo (Western Australia) initiated THINKLEARN to help develop the Perth North West Metropolitan Region as an economic centre for small business innovation.

THINKLEARN's uniqueness was *rethink*, a training and mentoring programme for small business owners originally developed by the Australian de Bono Institute (dbi) for South Australian small businesses, then further developed and delivered by the POWA Institute in Western Australia, through the Institute's alliance with dbi.

The THINKLEARN *rethink* involved 55 West Australian small business owners and managers in a training, mentoring and knowledge development programme over an 18 month period, funded by the Australian Government AusIndustry initiative and delivered by the POWA Institute in partnership with the City of Joondalup, City of Wanneroo, West Coast TAFE, North West Metro Small Business Centre.

Participants were trained and then coached in the practical application of Dr Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats® and Parallel Thinking®, Power of Perception™ thinking tools (formally known as Direct Attention Thinking Tools™ - DATT™) and Lateral Thinking tools.

Evaluation of the *rethink* programme and particularly the impact and value of this training and coaching for the business owners and managers participating in the programme was a requirement for Australian Government funding. This evaluation included the following feedback from participants:

Please Note: when participants refer to Direct Attention Thinking Tools™ or DATT™, these tools are now called Power of Perception thinking tools – only the name of the programme has changed not the tools.

Business: Corporate Backup (Data Warehousing for small businesses)

- With such an emphasis on Focus I have been able to structure meetings, tasks and day schedules such that time management has seen a noticeable improvement.
- DATT tools have been particularly helpful in providing a structure to solve problems in a different manner which gives us answers to these problems that we would never have previously come up with.

Business: B&J Bridges (Electrical Contracting)

- Increased professionalism in the business.
- Better problem solving capabilities.
- Increased happiness.
- More organised and productive staff meetings.
- Less emotion in discussions on business issues.
- Improved feedback from staff due to them now applying multiple perspectives to a discussion point.

Business: Ironbark Environmental (Environmental Science consultancy)

- We can now see that our environmental reports are more than just helping our clients to solve an immediate need...they are about finding new, more elegant long-term solutions.
- Most environmental issues need to be addressed in completely new ways – and this is the advantage of Lateral Thinking.
- I am now better able to chair business meetings and discussions with clients through use of the Six Hats.

Business: Cybershop (computer retailer)

- Systematic way of thinking ensures ideas and issues are addressed properly.
- Creativity is now on tap – you switch it on when you need to rather than having to wait for that inspiring moment.
- Your thinking is now more complete and more detailed, taking into account many other perspectives allowing more accurate solutions.
- More time is spent on developing ideas and solving problems rather than arguing over what is the best way to develop ideas and solve problems.
- The tools save you time by making sure that you focus on the problem to ensure it actually is the problem. It forces you to clarify in your mind what the problem really is.
- Brainstorming becomes an easy and enjoyable exercise that generates fantastic creative ideas. Normally brainstorming in our business may take 5 mins before we are out of ideas, with the tools, you can go on for hours.

Business: GB@Systems (multimedia, advertising, promotions)

- Allowed me to stay in control during meetings and exploit the creative potential of all participants in a non adversarial approach.
- Allowed me to review my own business strategies by generating innovative ideas, especially in the customer service area.
- Allowed me to systematically and confidently solve issues/problems by using and applying the DATT, Lateral Thinking/Parallel Thinking, and/or the Six Thinking Hats tools.
- Improved the way we approach prospects in meetings and networking situations.
- Huge improvement on time and energy wasting at meetings by introducing the Purpose Focus and/or Area Focus approach.
- Helped implementing a new referral/loyalty concept rewarding clients who work for our business.

Business: emergeone (health, fitness and wellness programs)

- Streamlined thinking, leading to less mental waste and greater utilization of time.
- Analytical thinking tools to help question direction and idea profitability.
- A more engaging approach to business planning leading to stronger conviction in decisions and direction, ultimately leading to greater 'niche' establishment.
- A new business direction and marketing strategy was developed.
- All tools are being implemented in one-on-one coaching framework leading to increased effectiveness with health and life coaching clients.
- A new range of courses called GET SET! were designed and taken to market.

Business: well written® (business analysis and planning)

- It has broadened my approach to thinking so that I have been able to come up with real, practical solutions that I may not have otherwise thought of. These solutions and ideas have provided my business with a new focus and direction.
- The tools have given me a strategy for working on my business instead of in my business.

Business: Innovative Skills Enterprise (organisational psychology and training)

- The opportunity for creativity and innovation in the business has increased.
- Taking the time to think in a focused manner has led to a process where our decision making is 'proactive' rather than 'reactive'.
- Having a 'method' to assist with problem solving has been extremely valuable.
- Taking time to think has led to a more 'focused' approach in solving problems in the business.
- Lateral Thinking™ has allowed more creative ideas to surface.
- A common language to make decisions between business partners has been possible.

Business: Carine Settlements (real Estate settlements)

- The tools have helped provide clarity when making decisions as each decision has been worked through one step at a time.
- Our business is improving as we have already implemented a number of decisions and still have a number to implement.
- The business will always use the tools in every decision because we have a better projection of the outcome.
- The tools take us forward – improving the business – and we know we’re moving forward because we’ve used the tools.

Business: Chinese Kung Fu and Tai Chi Academy

- By using the tools we have seen many areas of improvement, some only small but still significant.
- Problem solving is much easier and takes the “gut feeling” issue out of things and helps us look at things creatively and objectively.
- Our conventional business plan has been thrown out the door and we are in the process of developing a new one that we can use and evolve with.

Business: smartadata network (database design and business systems)

- My customers are delighted with my problem-solving skills.
- Improved Focus is leading to a strong positioning of my business in the market.
- Designing a way forward is near impossible without de Bono’s Thinking Tools.
- Using de Bono’s Thinking Tools to generate ideas and opportunities is a great tonic for the mind and mood.
- Customers appreciate that you can think in parallel with their thoughts.
- Every business owner wants the “helicopter view” achieved by using Edward de Bono’s Thinking Tools.

Business: Evergreen (artificial grass supplier)

- My thinking is a lot clearer. I feel more in control.
- My partner and workers have thinking sessions, using the Six Thinking Hats. The Hats has enabled us to solve internal problems, communicate and come up with fresh ideas.
- I never thought I was so creative until I learnt about Lateral Thinking. There is value in thinking.

Business: Wanneroo Botanical Gardens and Leap Frogs Café

- Our business has been resourced with a more skilled thinking ability.
- Parallel Thinking ensures we make more efficient use of our problem solving and creative thinking time.
- Greater quantity and quality of ideas.
- These tools have given us the ability to approach complex situations in a clear and structured way and at the same time promote creativity.
- Increased confidence to be bold in our thinking.
- Challenged us to challenge and expand our thinking power.

Business: Holly’s Stables (horse care product manufacturer)

- I am more focused with my thinking and more aware of my thinking now, which saves me so much time!
- I am more confident in making tough business decisions knowing I have considered all aspects of my thinking to reach my conclusions.
- I am far more creative & having lots of fun thinking, thanks to these wonderful tools. They really allow my brain to stretch to new dimensions!
- The quality of my thinking has improved out of sight. I enjoy challenges now, so I can apply the tools and see what new innovative solutions I can think up!
- I am able to plan ahead in my business as the tools give me great direction & new creative ideas which are exciting to implement.

- The tools enable me to become aware of how others are thinking. There has been more cooperation and understanding because of this.

Business: fi & co (fashion design, manufacturing, retail)

- Lateral Thinking has allowed me to happily step out of my comfort zone to challenge the conventional and create unconventional strategies and still fulfill my overall focus. This is a refreshing tool for me as it occasionally takes out the stagnant routine of running a business.
- Six thinking Hats has been a very versatile tool for me both in my business and personal life. It has given me more confidence in making decisions and in improving my leadership skills.
- DATT™ has given me a more clarified purpose on all factors of my business and a sense of achievement when put into practice.
- Applying the DATT tools have clarified and reinstated my business goals by mapping out the issues and identifying the relative course of action/s to be taken.
- Six Thinking Hats & Parallel Thinking has given me a better analysis of other people's mindsets and allowed me to develop better inter-relationship skills with people within and beyond my business.
- Using Lateral Thinking™ tools in my creative process has given me motivation to create some exciting, interesting and innovative designs.

Business: Ready to Help (product commercialisation, intellectual property management)

- Common visibility of a well defined and understood structure to any meeting helps bring the participants together and unite towards that common goal.
- Spending time up-front to clearly define the focus of your thinking is the essential first ingredient and then using the many different creative thinking tools can help get those "creative juices" flowing.
- Parallel thinking is a very powerful process which can overcome individual bias and brings out the value of every person's contribution.
- Recognising how rapidly I sub-consciously move through the different stages in my own thinking has helped me to take a step back and process ideas more thoroughly and carefully, whether I am alone or with others, inevitably leading to better outcomes.
- Edward de Bono has created a broad set of creative thinking tools which I can readily apply to many of my client's situations. These tools provide a solid and proven process that gives me more opportunities to solve the challenges my clients face.
- While we can tend to focus on technical solutions some of the toughest situations we face can be relational and by applying even one or two of the Direct Attention Tools such as O.P.V. (Other People's Views) can provide real clarity to help resolve these challenges.

Business: Managing Food Safety (food safety and hygiene programs, training and products)

- I have learnt the value of thinking! For my first three years in business, I rarely thought at all, I was all about action!
- An invaluable array of thinking tools that can be readily employed in so many different situations, not only in business but throughout life.
- The value of allocating time for thinking, it is a disciplined practice.
- Renewed motivation with an ability to define the focus of a meeting, project, task, problem etc. and remain centred on that focus. An unbelievably difficult skill, and prior to the *rethink* program I was unable to clearly define focus, and demonstrated extremely scattered thinking without any real gain.
- The infinite number of new ideas that can be created from using these tools either independently or in sequence.
- These tools are now imperative to moving the business forward. Unknowingly, the business was entrenched in a monotonous stream of thought, and did not allow for provocative thinking or '*serious creativity*'.

Business: IntelligentWealth (Financial Planning Services)

- We now have a set of tools to use when looking at a difficult problem for clients; that allows us to be creative at will regardless of our energy levels.
- Our clients have always perceived our business to be creative, inspired and motivated; the tools have taught us to be focused too.
- We have a better understanding of the thinking modes that people often operate in allowing us to communicate more effectively to reach a common goal.
- Our client discussions are lead by use of the tools; resulting in a greater understanding between planner and client of the purpose and outcomes for our advice.
- Our client value proposition has changed with application of the tools, to be more specific and geared towards future business opportunities
- The tools learned are being applied to all aspects of the business to improve efficiency, effectiveness and productivity. We have turned the business upside down to see what falls out.

Business: IT Call Out (IT services for small businesses)

- The training has added a new dimension to my thought life and energised my thinking in relation to my business. The training has been very applicable to my business and I highly recommend it to anyone in business.
- This course will influence my thinking for the rest of my life. Having this tool set available gives me a way to logically process ideas, concepts and problems in a clear and guided manner.
- The thinking tools have given me a framework to step through important decisions and has given me greater confidence in my ability to overcome problems by thinking things through fully.
- I'm very grateful for the training I have received in these tools and I am excited about the possibilities this creates for the future of my business.

Business: Vivacity (physiotherapy and rehabilitation for cancer sufferers)

- The thinking tools have allowed me to quickly and efficiently breakdown large tasks into manageable steps. The framework provided by the tools allows me to effectively tackle business issues even when exhaustion has hit.
 - I have been able to apply the de Bono thinking tools in many aspects of my life outside of the business, using the Six Thinking Hat for board meetings in the not-for-profit setting and the DATT tools in goal setting for personal and professional life.
 - The de Bono tools have challenged me to create a business model that is so unique that it doesn't compete against other business's only itself.
 - The tools provide an ideal framework to allow me to stream line my thinking process. It has been easier to make fast, accurate decisions for my business using the context created by thinking sessions.
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