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Focus on Innovation

Focus on Innovation is a monthly electronic newsletter designed to provoke thoughts and ideas on how to bring innovation to life within the organizations in which we work.

For Those on the Run

Are your problems keeping you up at night? This month's newsletter tells you how you can use the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) process as a way to put your problems to bed.

Innovate Yourself to Sleep

Have you ever lost sleep pondering over a complex problem in your life or work? If asked, many of us will say that we have had many sleepless nights, trying to sleep over some of the difficult problems in our life, hoping that somehow we will get an answer from our subconscious mind to our problem the next day.

When faced with a problem most people will go to any length to avoid thinking about or over-thinking the problem. Studies have shown that we spend a large percentage of our time worrying, i.e. 40% on things that will never happen; 30% on things that are over and in the past that can never be changed; 12% on needless worries about our health; 10% on petty miscellaneous worries; and 8% on real legitimate worries. Of the real legitimate worries there are two kinds: the problems we can solve and the problems beyond our ability to personally solve.

For those of us that avoid thinking about our problems, "what we resist persists"; problems continue to haunt us at the sub-conscious level. Whether it is over thinking about our problems or avoiding them, our problems tend to most often "present" themselves in our sleep leaving us sleep deprived and cranky the next day.

The good news is that most of our real problems fall under the category of problems we can solve ourselves and there are ways to focus on them productively allowing us to sleep at night. The Creative Problem Solving (CPS) process is one great tool to help with this.

Steps to Innovate Yourself to Sleep

1. **Creating the Space:** Pick 30 - 60 minutes a day, 5 days a week, on which you can fairly regularly count on. For many of us, this is usually before others are up in the morning or late at night when everyone has gone to bed, when the mind's clear and the house is quiet.

2. **Objective Finding:** Take a completely blank sheet of paper. List your goals, wishes, or challenges. Make a long list of wishes even if you already know your general area of interest. Begin each sentence with "I wish..." "It would be great if..." After you have done this, choose one goal, wish or challenge that you want to work on; out of all the things you identified, this one is truly keeping you up at night.
3. **Fact Finding:** Now make a long list of the facts (data, facts, questions and feelings) about the situation/problem - use who, what, where, when and how questioning approach. Once completed this, highlight all the facts that seem important or interesting about the situation/problem.
4. **Problem Finding:** A problem well defined is half solved. Redefine your problem in as many different ways as possible using "How to..." or "How might..." statements and then pick a specific statement that most clearly identifies the problem that you wish to solve.
5. **Idea Finding:** Brainstorm a list of ideas that will answer the "How to" or "How might" statement selected. Try to come up with at least 20 possible ideas to solve the problem. Change perspective: How would ____ view this problem? Simulate divergence using forced connections, analogies, SCAMPER (for more on these techniques refer to the Idea Generating Techniques Tool found on our ideas page <http://www.foursightconsulting.com/ideas/>). Once completed, highlight the ideas that are "intriguing" or "might work", even if you don't know exactly how yet.
6. **Solution Finding:** For the ideas you selected, identify the strengths and weaknesses of each idea and decide which ones to use. You can either generate criteria to evaluate each idea or use the PPC approach (Pluses, Potential, and Concerns) to help you decide which solution(s) to move forward.
7. **Acceptance Finding:** Develop an action plan for your solution(s) by taking stock of resources, who/what will assist in, and who will object to implementing your idea. Put your plan into action.

Finally, if you still are finding that problems are keeping you up at night keep a pen and pad of paper beside your bed. When problems wake you up, write them down. Capture all you're thinking; don't worry or become concerned about it at this point. Think of the problems as only waiting to be solved during your dedicated problem solving time the next day.

What's the Bottom line

You don't have to lose sleep over any of the problems you face. By spending time regularly using the CPS process you can attack your problems with force, allowing yourself to sleep restfully at night.



Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to others.

If you would like more information about the ideas and topics listed in this issue, contact Judy Laws, Ph.D. at jlaws@foursightconsulting.com.

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