



Seeing tomorrow's ideas...Today

foursight consulting

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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

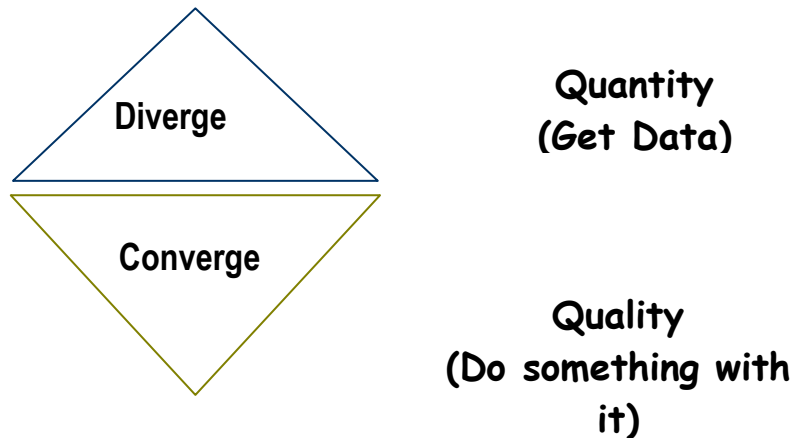
Staying true to the creative process is a challenge for most teams and individuals. Read this month's newsletter to identify these challenges and how to overcome them.

Staying True to the Creative Process

"The creative process is a process of surrender, not control."

- Julia Cameron, The Artist's Way

Whether trying to solve a problem, make a decision or come up with an idea for a new product or service, the creative process is an effective tool to help do this. For those of you who may not know or forget what the creative process involves, it can be easily summarized as follows:



When we are in the Diverge stage, it is important to follow divergent rules, that is:

- Defer Judgment
- The more ideas the better (We're after quantity not quality)
- Seek wild ideas
- Combine and Build on ideas (That's the magic of diverging)

The Converge stage guidelines include:

- Judging affirmatively; "What I like about this is ..."
- Being deliberate
- Examining, refining, revising and improving your ideas
- Checking your objectives; "It would be nice if ...*a list of your criterid*"

What is often a challenge for teams or individuals is staying true to the creative process when trying to solve problems, make decisions or come up with new ideas for something. At Foursight, we have found that the individuals and teams we work with struggle with this more often than not. Staying true to the creative process means really doing due diligence in each stage. Here are some of the common challenges that we have identified and how you can overcome them.

Challenges in Staying True to the Creative Process

- **Converge Tendencies:** For many, convergence is much easier than divergence. Some of us are even programmed that way, i.e. our learning style is the "Converging Style". People with the converging learning style are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories. If you are a "Converging Style", the key is to be patient and condition yourself to stay in the Diverge stage until it is time to move on. If you need to, write down your thoughts quickly and then move back to the Diverge stage. If you have this style on your team, remind the person of the diverge rules and ask them to hold off until the Converge stage where their strength at converging will be valued.
- **Break "Defer Judgment" Rules:** The rule that gets broken the most in the Diverge stage is the "Defer Judgment" rule. There is a tendency for people to want to discuss each idea at nausea in the Diverge stage. This is not the time to do this; the only conversation that should occur in this stage is getting all ideas on the table and if necessary, clarifying the idea, not judging or debating it. The Diverge stage should move quickly and hopefully be fun. It is important to keep people to the diverge rules when in this stage. Post the rules in the room if need be.
- **Combining and Building on Ideas:** The rule of "Combining and building on ideas" is a rule that is not leveraged the most, i.e. people don't take the time to take ideas presented and really build on them or combine them to come up with other ideas. Practicing this rule involves asking yourself or the team "What other ideas does this idea make me/us think of?" "How can I/we combine parts or ideas?" "Are there two things I/we could blend rather than coming up with something new?" The SCAMPER technique is a great technique to help implement this rule (click on <http://www.foursightconsulting.com/ideas/tools/Quick%20Reference%20-%20CPS%20and%20Idea%20Generating%20Techniques.pdf>)
- **Converging too Quickly:** Many individuals or teams don't do a great job at diverging. The tendency is to brainstorm a few ideas and quickly move onto the Converge stage. When in the Diverge stage, it is beneficial to set a target or quota of ideas and keep going until you meet it (e.g.; no less than 50 ideas). To be able to generate this many ideas you will definitely need to use advance brainstorming techniques such as forced connections, analogy, inverse, etc. For more on these techniques, click on <http://www.foursightconsulting.com/ideas/tools/Quick%20Reference%20-%20CPS%20and%20Idea%20Generating%20Techniques.pdf>
- **Not Allowing for Diverging in Converge Stage:** Even though you are in the Converge stage of the process, i.e. narrowing down ideas, determining what would be the best decision or solution to a something, we still need to be open to new ideas that may come up. Also, when evaluating

ideas, it is important to identify ways to overcome important concerns. For example, for each concern, generate at least 15 ways to overcome that concern.

- **Knowing How to Turn Solutions into Action:** The creative process doesn't stop when developing action plans; diverge-converge still applies. It is important to diverge on "What are all the action steps that need to take place in order to implement your solution?" and to identify all the obstacles and resistance that will be in the way. Then converge to identify "What modifications need to be made? How is success measured/identified? What are the steps to be taken by whom by when? What's my plan?"

It is hard to be prescriptive as to when to move from the Diverge stage to the Converge stage. Setting an idea quota of at least 35 ideas before moving on to the Converge stage will certainly help. Also, before moving to the Diverge stage or ending the Converge stage, ask yourself or the team "Have I/we really done due diligence to this stage?"

What's the Bottom line

Due diligence to the creative process will lead to better solutions, decisions, and product development.



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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