**A New Way to Generate More Ideas**

**By Brian Jud**

1,009,188 ISBNs were assigned by Bowker in 2017. If you want to sell more books in such a crowded field, they need to stand out in a positive way. In their effort to rise above the competition, authors conduct innovation sessions to think outside the box, brainstorming for the best creative strategy. This can put undue pressure on them to come up with the one best idea. In most cases, that burden will reduce creativity.

However, innovation is still required for your books to get noticed. If you reduce the anxiety to find the best way to become more noticeable, your creative sessions can be more effective. These three steps to creative problem solving can help you do that: 1) Intention, 2) Attention, 3) No Tension. Define the problem, gather information, then relax and let ideas come to you.

* **Intention**. The topic may be the fact that sales are down, but that is a symptom of a deeper issue. Define the cause of the problem so you know exactly what you are trying to accomplish. The emphasis here is on clarity. Focus on what you want to accomplish
* **Attention**. Innovation doesn’t start with good ideas - it starts with good questions. Ask, why sales are sales down. Are you addressing the proper target audience? Is the content sufficiently unique? Are you selling only through bookstores, or could you sell to non-bookstore buyers?

Frame your questions to stimulate multiple responses. If you say, "Where else can we sell this book?" then the first plausible idea will answer the question. Instead, ask, "In how many other markets can we sell this book?" This will generate other possible solutions such as selling to or through buyers in corporations, government agencies, associations, non-bookstore retailers, book clubs or academic markets.

Instead of searching for an idea that *must* work, stimulate an array of ideas from which you may choose. Sometimes a thought needs a little more attention, just a minor twist that unwittingly creates the perfect solution. Like trying to make a round peg fit into a square hole, it requires some shaving to make it fit.

* **No tension**. Remove the pressure to innovate. Creativity occurs best when you are not trying to make it happen. When you let go of the need to come up with *the* best idea, you can come up with several ideas, with one or two more likely to stand out.

This process is akin to using a kaleidoscope. Keep adding new ideas and giving it more twists. Eventually the entire picture changes and a new combination comes into view. Voilà, the real problem is solved, and more people will notice – and buy – your books.

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