

5 Behaviors that Spur Creative Thinking

Creativity lies at the center of new product development. If new products are the lifeblood of continued growth, new and good ideas are the hearts that pumps it. Successful new product development can be achieved if you have a solid creative foundation. Here are 5 behaviors to help:

1. Define your parameters. Great ideas don't occur in a vacuum. Defining clear limits within which you're focusing -- such as a specific tool use scenario -- allows you to narrow down your search, and simplify your creative process.

2. Seek outside inspiration. There's nothing that says you can't borrow ideas from your competitors, or gain a creative spark from your previous efforts. By utilizing the "leapfrog" principle, you can develop disruptive technology without having to reinvent the wheel.

3. Set time aside. While it may be true that your best ideas hatch in the shower, the car, or in airport waiting rooms, it's also true that epiphanies are a direct result of previous effort. By dedicating strict creativity time on the calendar, we ensure there's time for the effort to accumulate, and the ideas to percolate.

4. Let your idea breathe. Creativity can be fragile. Giving ideas the room to breathe, as well as the time to grow, is always preferable to squelching them with undue pressure to produce immediately. Pre-planning for what we call "gestation time" is essential.

5. Be persistent. When questioned about his failure to produce a working lightbulb, Thomas Edison said "I have not failed 1000 times, I have successfully discovered 1000 ways to NOT make a light bulb." That really says it all when it comes to persistence, and highlights the importance of patience as it applies to new product development.