

## 4 ways admins unleash their creativity

Usually, it's the creative individual—the person who constantly comes up with new, fresh ideas or who addresses situations and problems in a way no one else has considered—who makes it to the top of the admin field.

There are some specific steps you can take to break through your preconceptions and view problems and situations in new ways that will help you become a problem-solver for your boss:

**1. Turn the situation upside down.** To get a new perspective on a landscape, a Japanese artist starts by looking at it upside down—literally bending down and peering between his or her legs at the scene! Not a very dignified position, but one that enables one to break an old frame of reference and examine the landscape differently.

When you're faced with a problem that doesn't seem to have an easy solution, turn it upside down. Ask yourself:

- What if this were reversed?
- If it's inside, suppose it were now outside? If it's long, suppose it were now short?
- Could some negative aspects be considered positive, and some positive aspects negative?
- Just because A has always done it, is there any reason why B or C can't instead?

**2. Tear the problem apart.** One way to shatter the blocks that hamper your thinking is to take the problem apart, piece by piece. List the elements. Then go over them one by one, looking for new relationships among the parts.

**3. Rearrange it.** Take the case of an administrative professional who found herself in a rush every Wednesday at lunch because she had to enter budget figures into a spreadsheet before her boss's 2 p.m. directors' meeting. She attended the 11 a.m. accounting meeting every week to get the figures, and the turnaround time between the two meetings was just too short.

She decided to try rearranging the sequence and asked accounting if it would be possible to get the figures earlier than 11 a.m. It turned out the figures were actually available each Tuesday by noon. So not only was the administrative professional able to update her boss's spreadsheet in plenty of time for his meeting, but also she began arriving at the accounting meeting with an understanding of the company finances.

Just rearranging the order of doing things made her day more pleasant, and people began remarking that she had "a head for figures."

**4. Find the analogy.** Free your imagination by answering questions like the following:

- Are some elements in that situation similar to those in mine?
- What does this remind me of?
- What can I borrow from another situation that would apply to this one?
- Whose approach could I copy?
- In relation to this problem, can I finish this sentence: "I will treat this as if it were ...?"