

Productive Thinking Model

The Productive Thinking Model (Think^x) was developed by Tim Hurson, a Canadian author, speaker, and creativity theorist. The Productive Thinking Model is a framework rather than a technique; that is, various creativity techniques such as brainstorming and lateral thinking can be applied at different stages of the process.

Step 1: "What's Going On?"

Establishes a context for the problems or opportunities being addressed, exploring different ways of stating the so-called "itch", exploring what factors, circumstances, and entities are involved, and what a solution might look like.

There are actually five sub-steps to this phase:

- * "What's the Itch?", generating a long list of perceived problems or opportunities, often re-stating similar ones in several different ways, and then looking for patterns and clusters with the mass in order to select one key "problem" to address
- * "What's the Impact?", digging deeper into the issue and identifying how it affects the world
- * "What's the Information?", describing various aspects of the problem in detail
- * "Who's Involved?", identifying other stakeholders in the issue
- * "What's the Vision?", identifying what would be different if the issue were resolved, in the form of a "wish" statement (e.g., "If only my dog didn't run away when I let him outside.")

Step 2: "What's Success?"

The second step establishes a vision for a future with the problem solved or the opportunity exploited. In this stage often active imagination is used to imagine, explore, and describe how things would be if the issue were resolved. This vision then informs a process of creating a clearly articulated view of the future, using a tool called "DRIVE", short for:

- * Do - what do you want the solution to do?
- * Restrictions - what must the solution not do?
- * Investment - what resources can be invested?
- * Values - what values must you live by? (e.g. environmentally friendly, etc.)
- * Essential outcomes - what are the essential outcomes?

Step 3: "What's the Question?"

The third step frames the challenge by turning it into a question. This is accomplished through brainstorm-like techniques eliciting as many questions as possible, and then clustering, combining, and choosing the question or questions that seem most stimulating.

Step 4: "Generate Answers"

Through the use of brainstorming and other idea-generating techniques, the fourth step is designed to create a long list of possible solutions to the problem question. One of those solutions (or several, combined) is selected for further development.

Step 5: "Forge the Solution"

Uses a specific tool called "POWER" to develop the selected solution into something more robust. POWER is short for:

- * Positives - what's good about the idea?
- * Objections - what's bad about it?
- * What else? - what does it remind you of?
- * Enhancements - how can what's good about it be made better?
- * Remedies - how can the things that are bad about it be corrected?

Step 6: "Align Resources"

The final step translates the selected, developed solution into an action plan that may include, among other things:

- * to do lists
- * timelines and milestones
- * lists of people who need to get involved
- * lists of issues that need further work