Think Better
— An Innovator’s Guide to Productive Thinking


Reviewed by CHRISTIE SHEPHERD

Filled with real-life stories and inspirational quotes, Think Better provides a road map for those wanting to spark new ideas or solve persistent problems.

In this age of constant reinvention and intense competition, finding new ways to be ahead of the pack is always appealing. How do you find that elusive idea? Where do the simple, yet effective ideas come from? According to author Tim Hurson, we can be retrained to think more productively, to come up with fresher, better ideas and smarter solutions.

Starting with an overview of thinking styles and why human beings think the way they do, the book then breaks down the six-step system Hurson has devised. The framework is easy to follow and each chapter uses examples of fictional company responses to illustrate the concepts.

So what does he recommend? Hurson encourages companies and individuals to take a structured approach to problem-solving and to go the extra mile. The goal is to find solutions and ideas that are either overlooked or never usually considered.

However, the Think Better style of brainstorming goes way beyond the “list every idea you can think of then pick one” type of problem-solving. The process suggested pushes further to seek out, review, choose and then put into action the new solution.

A consultant in productive thinking and innovation, Hurson’s clients have included some big names such as Shell Oil, Yahoo!, Prudential Insurance, RBC Royal Bank and Conagra Foods. Although he can’t always tell us the full story, because of client confidentiality, the revelations are nonetheless interesting and inspiring.

The six steps of the Think Better principle are:

- What’s Going On?
- What’s Success?
- What’s the Question?
- Generate Answers.
- Forge the Solution.
- Align Resources.

The steps seem elementary, but this is perhaps their charm. Keep it simple – achieve results.

At times I was left feeling that Hurson’s message was a little lost in translation. Keeping in mind that Hurson is usually a consultant working on real-life problems, his attempt to distil all of his tricks and tips into one six-step program felt lacking in places. How can you capture a man’s charisma on paper?

In saying that, the book is accessible and would suit those wrapping their heads around group problem-solving for the first time or those seeking a ready-made, simple structure to follow.

Each of the six parts can also be used in isolation. So if you have a solution you’ve already come up with but are unsure how to implement it, ‘Think Better’ has a structure for you to follow.

Nothing in the productive thinking model is particularly radical. However, according to Hurson’s clients, when it is applied to real-life problems this simple structure really does work.

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