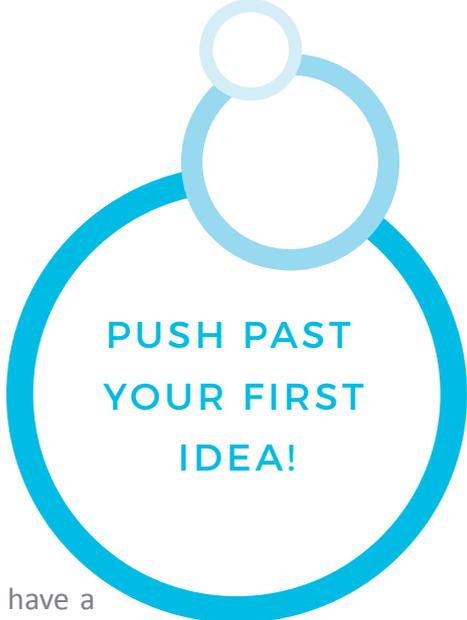


Ever lost something, then after searching for and finding it, had somebody say, “It’s always in the last place you look, isn’t it?” Well, of course it is: no one keeps looking for something after they find it! In creative terms though, it can actually be tremendously helpful to do exactly that. Here are three ways to make sure you don’t stop with one idea!



**PUSH PAST
YOUR FIRST
IDEA!**

A Back-up Plan

Scientist Linus Pauling said it: “The best way to have a good idea is to have a lot of ideas.” Too true! Many people make the mistake of thinking that once they have one idea or answer to a problem, then the work is done. Indeed, it’s quite common to see people relaxing after a single good idea is presented in a brainstorming meeting, for example. In truth, it may not be the best idea or even a great idea – but just the sense of relief of having an idea takes the pressure off!

One way to help get around this is to consider any solution to be a back-up plan in the event that nothing better comes along! It’s important that you don’t relax and say, “Okay, that’s the idea; now we’ll find a back up!” Rather, the attitude needs to be: “Let’s consider that a back-up plan and carry on!” Continue to explore the issue with other techniques and available resources, as though you don’t want to use the idea that you have. After exhausting all the possibilities, you’ll be in a far better position to pick from options that solve the problem or deliver to the brief.

Use the Opposite Technique

It may be a popular saying, but no magician seriously entertains the adage that the hand is quicker than the eye - not for a moment! There is a phrase one sometimes hears in magic, though, that perfectly illustrates the Opposite Technique: “If you can’t hide it, paint it red...” This colourful advice aims to communicate that if you as a magician can’t make a secret move so small as to render it completely unnoticeable, then do the opposite... Make it a large move; so big that the audience considers it unimportant!

In broader terms, this type of opposite thinking puts a person who has just one idea in the position to deliver a second, almost effortlessly. Simply look at the first idea and ask yourself, “What’s the opposite of this?” For example, DMI arrived at the concept for its Retro Toy Rube Goldberg machine in exactly this way. One of the team suggested building an enormous machine, spread throughout the entire office, using work equipment... And to film it with a series of cuts from one room to another...

That gave rise, almost immediately, to the final idea: the exact opposite! A much smaller machine, in one room, made from toys, and filmed in one take. You can see the piece here <https://vimeo.com/81380418> and, more importantly, read lots more about the essential nature of The Opposite Technique here: <http://www.dmiproductions.co.uk/info>

“DMI are an immensely talented and creative bunch” Lesley Singleton Playtime PR

Invite Honest Feedback

Seems that there are two kinds of people seeking feedback on their ideas... Those that secretly just want you to say that their ideas are brilliant so as to feed their massive, delusional egos; mark their territory; and sweep criticism aside... And those that genuinely want to improve an idea! If you're among the latter, you may well find you have to coax others into giving an honest opinion, such is the prevalence of the former.

That being the case, instead of simply asking "What do you think of this?" you might try inviting feedback this way... First, make it clear that you want an honest opinion. If you trust the person to whom you're speaking, you could say, "I really respect your view so I'm asking you for totally honest feedback: what do you think of this?"

Alternatively, you might show your thinking to someone you know less well before asking, "Do you like this?" While this in itself creates a fairly mediocre opportunity for feedback, you immediately follow up their answer with, "And what needs to happen to this idea for you to love it?" The reason this works particularly well is that it lets the other person tell you what they don't like in an unusually safe context.

Finally, if you regularly solicit feedback from the same people, it often pays to establish a 'scaling' system. Beloved by therapists and communication gurus alike, a feedback scale invites others to quantify their thinking in a simple, near-universal way. You could ask, "On a scale of zero to ten – with zero being complete hatred, and ten being absolute enthusiasm – how do you rate this idea?"

Whatever the answer, you're able to dig deeper. For example, if they rate the idea as a seven you might ask, "Okay! And in your opinion what would make it a nine?" Again, this creates a safe context in which to criticise or build on the idea you've suggested.

With these three approaches you should find that you're able to start turning every idea you have into at least two! The secret is to get into the habit of wanting more than one option, and continuing to do a little extra work to get them - even when many people would happily settle on the first one!