



Looking for Ideas?

Jack Foster, author of *How to Get Ideas* by (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, www.berrett-koehler.com), suggests these ways to come up with creative ideas:

1. Become Idea-Prone. Realize that ideas abound, and visualize yourself as a font of ideas. Getting an idea doesn't depend on how much time you have. You can get ideas while having lunch or taking a shower. Coming up with an idea depends on your belief in its existence and on your belief in yourself.

2. Get More Input. Accumulate as many different bits of knowledge as you can. Read new books, meet new people, go different places, have a wide variety of experiences. The more you know, the more different things you'll be able to combine to create something new.

3. Rejoice in Failure. "I have not failed," Thomas Edison said. "I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." As he realized, every failure brings you a step closer to success. Once you've failed and realize it's not so terrible, you also get a sense of freedom that unlocks your creativity.

4. Have Fun. Humor and innovation go together. The more you can laugh and enjoy what you're doing, the more likely you are to come up with good ideas.

5. Forget about It. When you get stuck on an idea, put it aside and work on something else. When you switch gears, you let your unconscious work on the problem that's giving you trouble. When you come back to it, you will find that your unconscious has solved your problem without you even knowing it. □



A Different Kind of "Smart"

In *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Success* (published by Jossey-Bass, www.josseybass.com), Karl Albrecht pinpoints five areas of competence (referred to by the acronym S.P.A.C.E.) that socially intelligent leaders possess:

1. Situational Awareness is the ability to read people's behaviors in terms of their possible intentions. It includes an understanding of the social rules that govern various situations and an appreciation for others' points of view.

2. Presence is a collection of signals—including appearance, posture, and subtle movements—that gives other an impression of you. It's about living in the moment, being available to people, and having a passion for your purpose that attracts energy and attention.

3. Authenticity reveals how honest and sincere you are with others and with yourself. It involves being yourself and genuinely connecting with other people

4. Clarity measures your ability to express yourself clearly. Improving your vocabulary, avoiding jargon, using the active rather than passive voice, and learning to use metaphors effectively can help you get your ideas across to others.

5. Empathy invites you to look at how aware and considerate of others' feelings you are. The key principle of empathy is making an effective connection with another person, based on where they are, what they need, and how they view the situation. □

Raising Funds in an Unreliable Economy

Kim Klein wrote *Reliable Fundraising in Unreliable Times* (Jossey-Bass, www.josseybass.com) for small organizations, which are often fragile and easily affected by an up-and-down economy. This is her best book yet, updating much of her previous information and adding new, well-thought-out guidance to navigate today's economy.

Surviving economic turmoil involves planning, evaluating results, and building community with others who share your organization's vision. Difficulties with fundraising are often symptoms of a larger problem. Resolving these problems requires identifying what they really are. Klein, as always, has sound ways to turn these challenges into opportunities. She also explains how to avert crisis, practice time management, and build a strong organization that can fulfill its mission. □

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

Looking for the Nonprofit Sector

Traditional boundaries between sectors are breaking down. *In Search of the Nonprofit Sector*, edited by Peter Frumkin and Jonathan Imber (Transaction Publishers, www.transactionpub.com) gathers together authors with unique perspectives on how these blurred borders are changing nonprofits.

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As the editors note, the nonprofit sector is an unruly collection of contradictions. This absorbing book offers ideas for understanding this new terrain, exploring such questions as whether nonprofits' tax privileges are miscalculated (the answer: maybe so, when the entity is a nonprofit-business mix) and whether bigger is better when it comes to nonprofit size (again the answer is maybe, because if nonprofits remain too small they have less chance of surviving). Also see "The Nonprofit Sector Does Not Exist," *Nonprofit World*, (Vol. 26, No. 2). □



Leading across Generations

Are baby boomers starting to leave nonprofit leadership roles by the droves, or are they clinging onto their jobs, making it difficult for younger generations to move up? Some in the field fear an exodus of leadership as boomers retire, followed by turbulence as unprepared young people step in. Others see disenfranchisement as boomers refuse to give up leadership to younger people. This difference in perspectives is today's generation gap in the nonprofit sector—boomers who don't trust younger generations to lead and young people who want to step in but lead in a different way.

Many boomers learned through experience how to lead nonprofits, while gen-Xers and millennials tend to learn through formal education and corporate experience. Boomers sacrificed income and time to build their organizations. Younger professionals want greater life balance. They're no less committed to the work; they just recognize and desire the long-term benefits of balance that boomers have talked of for so long.

Working Across Generations: Defining the Future of Nonprofit Leadership (John Wiley & Sons, www.wiley.com) explores how the generations can understand each other and work through leadership transitions. The role of boomers is to mentor and partner with younger workers to prepare them for leadership roles. Younger workers should support older leaders but challenge them not to become complacent.

The authors (Frances Kunreuther, Helen Kim, and Robby Rodríguez) understand the needs of each generation and the decisions facing aging leadership. They explore the ways leaders of each generation view the future, and they think through the type of leadership needed in the future. In *Working Across Generations*, they present an intelligent discussion about how leadership in the nonprofit sector can move from one generation to the next in the best way possible.

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

Who's the Liar in Your Life?

The question isn't whether people are lying to you. It's how much they're lying, and why. As *The Liar in Your Life: The Way to Truthful Relationships* by Robert Feldman (Hatchett Book Group, www.hatchettbookgroup.com) makes clear, everyone lies. Research shows we start lying when we're still babies, crying and making a fuss to get attention, and there's a hereditary advantage to lying. We're born to lie.

Making matters more complicated, you probably think you can tell when someone's lying, but study after study shows we're all poor lie-spotters. Even police and FBI agents, whose jobs involve detecting lies, get it right only 47% of the time. There are no universal cues to deception.

All these stumbling blocks are intensified at work, where people have powerful reasons to lie—to keep their jobs, make their bosses happy, maintain a certain image for themselves and co-workers, and get their tasks done as quickly as possible.

To handle this problem, first be sure to promote a culture of honesty in the workplace. If people at the top are deceptive, it sends a signal that lying is OK.

Make it clear when you want honest criticism rather than superficial compliments. Often we don't recognize lies because we'd rather be reassured than face the truth. To deal with daily deception, you must quit relying on reassuring falsehoods.

Be vigilant, and realize that everything you're told could be a lie. Accept that you can't automatically detect deception. Stop believing everything without consideration, and learn to be comfortable with uncertainty.

Verify what people tell you. You needn't authenticate everything, of course, but if a piece of information is important to you, check it out. Before hiring someone, investigate all their assertions, such as college degrees they claim to have earned. The issue isn't finding someone who won't ever lie to you (an impossibility) but someone who won't lie to you in any significant way.

Curb Risks with Conflict of Interest Policies

As a result of new conflict of interest disclosures required by the IRS's new Form 990, many nonprofits are focusing on conflict of interest policies. Conflicts of interest can arise when a board member's company or friends and family do business with the nonprofit.

Whether the conflicts are real or potential, avoiding the appearance of impropriety is critical in safeguarding your organization's reputation. Grant Thornton LLP (www.grantthornton.com) offers ways to do so:

- **Be certain that board committees review** all conflict of interest situations. Your board should be the ultimate decision-maker on all such matters.
- **Consider expanding the number of people** required to sign conflict of interest statements beyond the board and senior management.
- **Make sure all staff and board members are aware of the organization's vendors** to avoid conflict situations.
- **Disclose to the IRS** all business and family relationships among the board, and between the organization's board members and employees.

Also see "Navigating Tough Conflict of Interest Situations," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (www.snpo.org/members).

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Just Coincidence?

Carl Jung defined synchronicity as “meaningful coincidence,” an event that shows us the correspondence between things. The unifying connection may have always been present, but a meaningful coincidence makes it clear to us. Here are ways you can open yourself to synchronicity’s promise:

- **Write down** coincidences as they happen. Notice which of them later become meaningful to you.
- **Consider** the significant events of your life, and explore the synchronicities around them. Look at events that seemed negative at first but then turned into something good. Now look at negatives in your present life. Find something good in what seems so bad, and find ways to augment the positive.
- **Learn from** the surprises that come your way. Think of ways to expand the possibility of more surprises each day.
- **Think about** people you have met—or remet—recently. What might they bring to your life?
- **Go out** of character. Explore different interests and belief systems, and challenge yourself to act in new ways. Invent rituals that take you out of character—as happens at costume parties or on Halloween.
- **Forsake** your routine some day, and be totally open to whatever happens. Make a point of replacing habit with creative, spontaneous action.
- **Invite** the pain of change rather than avoiding it. Find a way to “play with pain,” as Charlie Chaplin described the secret of his humor.
- **Look over** your life story and notice three ways destiny seemed to happen to you and three ways in which you had a hand in what occurred. Look more carefully later, and find a similarity in all six. □

—adapted from *The Power of Coincidence* (Shambhala Publications, www.shambhala.com)

How to Gain a New Brain

Intriguing new research has proven the brain’s neuroplasticity—its ability to change its own structure through thought and activity. Consider these strategies for sculpting the brain you want:

- **Turn your full attention** to what you’re doing—the necessary condition for plastic change.
- **Protect your brain** by not getting worked up about little things. Stress releases glucocorticoids, which can kill brain cells.
- **Imagine you’re doing something**, and you’ll engage the same motor and sensory programs involved in actually doing it. If performed systematically, mental practice is an effective way to learn or rehearse a physical skill with minimal physical work.
- **Put a high value on sleep**, which helps consolidate learning and change the brain. When you learn a skill, you’ll be better at it the next day if you have a good night’s sleep.
- **To learn a difficult new skill**, borrow parts of the brain devoted to other activities. You can vastly increase your processing power by creating a block between those other parts of the brain and their usual functions. For instance, if you’re faced with a huge auditory task, such as memorizing Homer’s *Iliad*, you might blindfold yourself to recruit parts of the brain usually devoted to sight.
- **Practice brain exercises regularly** to keep your mental skills sharp and strengthen new parts of your brain. See www.positscience.com and www.sharpbrains.com. □

—adapted from *Change the Mind, Change the Brain* (published by Mind and Life Institute, www.mindandlife.org) and *The Brain that Changes Itself* (Viking, Penguin Group, www.us.penguin.com)

Tap the Creativity of the Group

We’re moving from a world of individual experts to groups, teams, and other communal ways of knowing. *The Power of Collective Wisdom* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, www.bkeconnection.com) describes ideas for harnessing that potential:

- **Appreciate the talents** of each individual. Recognize the deeply rooted human need to be understood, to feel both unique and part of a group.
- **Listen deeply.** Hear what people are really saying, even when they’re silent. Go beyond the words, and listen to the whole person.
- **Turn off your monkey mind.** Monkey mind is the Buddhist term for the way our thoughts hop like monkeys do from tree to tree. As you connect with others, keep your thoughts in the present moment.
- **Listen with respect** even when you disagree. Understand that the future is created with other people, including those who are different from you. Shift your mind from conflict and separation to the common ground you share with others.
- **Be mindful** of contributions people are making, and voice those observations aloud to the group.
- **Ask yourself** these questions: What’s happening here and now? How am I feeling, and how do others seem to be feeling? What’s working well? What’s being kept to the side?
- **Open your mind** to new ideas, perspectives, patterns, and insights. When you’re fully open to the power of the group, you will be transformed. □

