EDWARD DE BONO

"On the Internet there is much misleading and erroneous information about 'lateral thinking' and 'parallel thinking™'. Some of the sites make false claims about me and my work. Because this is my official website I want to take this opportunity of clarifying matters regarding lateral thinking and parallel thinking™.

LATERAL THINKING

I invented the term 'lateral thinking' in 1967. It was first written up in a book called "The Use of Lateral Thinking" (Jonathan Cape, London) - "New Think" (Basic Books, New York) - the two titles refer to the same book.

For many years now this has been acknowledged in the Oxford English Dictionary which is the final arbiter of the English Language.

There are several ways of defining lateral thinking, ranging from the technical to the illustrative.

1. "You cannot dig a hole in a different place by digging the same hole deeper"

This means that trying harder in the same direction may not be as useful as changing direction. Effort in the same direction (approach) will not necessarily succeed.

2. "Lateral Thinking is for changing concepts and perceptions"

With logic you start out with certain ingredients just as in playing chess you start out with given pieces. But what are those pieces? In most real life situations the pieces are not given, we just assume they are there. We assume certain perceptions, certain concepts and certain boundaries. Lateral thinking is concerned not with playing with the existing pieces but with seeking to change those very pieces. Lateral thinking is concerned with the perception part of thinking. This is where we organise the external world into the pieces we can then 'process'.

3. "The brain as a self-organising information system forms asymmetric patterns. In such systems there is a mathematical need for moving across patterns. The tools and processes of lateral thinking are designed to achieve such 'lateral' movement. The tools are based on an understanding of self-organising information systems."

This is a technical definition which depends on an understanding of self-organising information systems.

4. "In any self-organising system there is a need to escape from a local optimum in order to move towards a more global optimum. The techniques of lateral thinking, such as provocation, are designed to help that change."

This is another technical definition. It is important because it also defines the mathematical need for creativity.

PARALLEL THINKING™

Parallel thinking is best understood in contrast to traditional argument or adversarial thinking.

With the traditional argument or adversarial thinking each side takes a different position and then seeks to attack the other side. Each side seeks to prove that the other side is wrong. This is the type of thinking established by the Greek Gang of Three (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) two thousand four hundred years ago.

Adversarial thinking completely lacks a constructive, creative or design element. It was intended only to discover the 'truth' not to build anything.

With 'parallel thinking' both sides (or all parties) are thinking in parallel in the same direction. There is co-operative and co-ordinated thinking. The direction itself can be changed in order to give a full scan of the situation. But at every moment each thinker is thinking in parallel with all the other thinkers. There does not have to be agreement. Statements or thoughts which are indeed contradictory are not argued out but laid down in parallel. In the final stage the way forward is 'designed' from the parallel thought that have been laid out.

A simple and practical way of carrying out 'parallel thinking' is the Six Hats™ method which is now being used widely around the world both because it speeds up thinking and also because it is so much more constructive than traditional argument thinking.

Information on Lateral Thinking and Six Hats™ methods are available on this website. Particulars of training courses are also given.

*Lists of current accredited independent trainers and current accredited corporate trainers who have been trained by me or my Master Trainers are provided in order that persons can verify that offers of training and courses in Lateral Thinking, Six Hats™, Serious Creativity™ and DATT™ are being provided by appropriately qualified instructors. If there are doubts about the credentials of an instructor claiming to have been trained in my methods please enquire (see trainers).*