

# Facilities Focus

## “Creative...who, me?”

By the FM Solutions Division of Commonwealth Architects

“Creativity is the process of discovering something you did not start out with.”  
-Collingwood

We have all seen those artistic people in the park at one time or another. You know, those free spirits whiling away the afternoon capturing little slices of life with the strokes of a pencil. To many passing by with briefcase in hand, the creativity that shapes the image on their sketchpads holds little importance in the realm of business. This way of thinking, however, could not be any further from the truth. People in all forms of business need innovative tools to bridge the gap between traditional business practices and the need for modern change. For example, multi-billionaires Bill Gates and Donald Trump have been able to achieve this goal through the development of their own original business processes. Creativity is not just music or art, it is problem solving by inventing new methods.

Right now, you may be telling yourself that an article on creativity in Facility Management will be lost on you. After all, the profession is somewhat of a science. You are reminding yourself that creative thinking is only exhibited as a byproduct of the occasional move gone wrong or mag lock gone bad. Give yourself some credit. You may be more creative than you realize. Thinking creatively is a substantial element in relationship management, design, contract management, and yes, building engineering. In the language of creativity, these categories translate into crisis management, problem solving, delegation of authority, and design/build practices.

To get a sense of just how creative you may be, consider the following question; how could you fit 100 people into a canoe? The question is purely conceptual in that you are likely never to deal with this issue in your daily work schedule. The point is that the question is so abstract, that it leaves creative thinking as the only means for solving the riddle. Perhaps the canoe could be eighty feet long. If it were made of gold, you could sell it and buy a larger boat. You could invent a machine that shrinks people. Do the people all have to be in the canoe at the same time?

If the question above seems challenging, do not be discouraged. Creativity is not an innate blessing, it is a skill, like baseball, which simply requires practice in order to achieve proficiency. When seemingly impossible issues arise in the future, try the following creativity exercises:

1. Do not be afraid to say “What if?” By starting with the desired result and working backwards, the first step may eventually present itself.
2. Identify what everyone else is not doing and why. This will help you rule out possibilities and perhaps discover something that everyone else was afraid to consider.

3. Change your location. If the problem is in the third floor break room, camp out there for a few moments while considering the solutions.
4. Reverse the problem. If you want to know how to make the move a success, list what could cause it to be a failure.
5. Hold brainstorming sessions. Have someone else write the ideas on a board so that you can continue thinking while viewing all of the ideas.

Creativity is not just for the dreamers of the world and you should not be afraid to take advantage of it. Learning to use creative thinking techniques in decision-making may seem laborious at first. However, in time, you will develop your own creative methods and the process will become synonymous with your managerial style. Then, the next time a tough cost center question arises, you will be able to suspend convention for a brief moment, step out into the park in your mind, and make a few strokes on your own on your sketchpad.

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