

1. Broadening the thinking. We search for a range of characteristics and angles related to a certain problem.
2. Deepening the thinking. We try to detect a problem's underlying concepts and assumptions.
3. Shifting the thinking. We view the problem in a context that is completely different from the one in which it originated.

These three thinking dimensions are presented in the figure below.

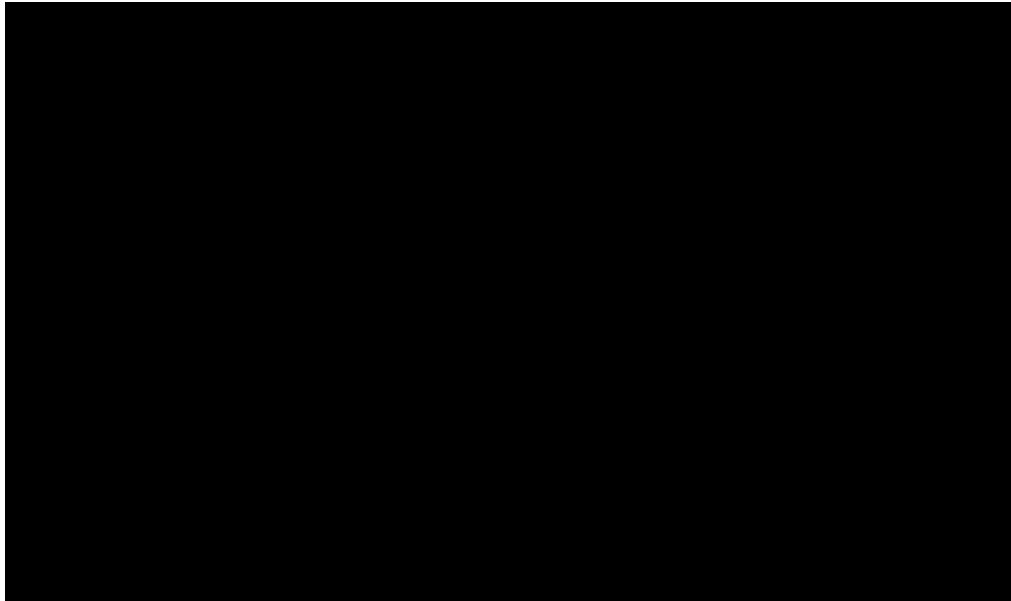


Figure 1: Three-dimensional thinking

Thinking along three-dimensional lines guarantees what is known as divergent thinking: a problem is approached from various angles. Three-dimensional thinking prevents you from moving into the realm of convergent thought, a form of problem-solving thought. Three-dimensional thinking provides you with a format with which you can develop and orient your thoughts, thus leading to new ideas. We shall discuss these directions of thinking below.

Broadening the thinking

By broadening our thinking, we consciously aim to place a certain problem or a challenge in a wider perspective. We study alternative opinions, points of view and solutions. By broadening your thinking about a certain problem, you first attempt to gather more information and then you formulate a particular choice or opinion. The most powerful way of achieving this is by asking yourself and others questions. A question may act as an effective catalyst for the spread of knowledge and the creation of ideas. Those who always seem to know how and when to ask the right questions are thus able to boost their own creativity and that demonstrated by others.

Here we mention three ways to broaden our thinking in which questions play an important role.

a. Questions from different perspectives

A common yet powerful technique in addressing any problem is asking as many W-questions as possible:

- Why does this present a problem?
- Why does it require a solution?
- Why should it be me who solves the problem?

- Which other, related problems exist?
- Which problem elements can be distinguished?
- Which aspects of the problem look familiar?

- Who actually owns the problem?
- Who will ultimately

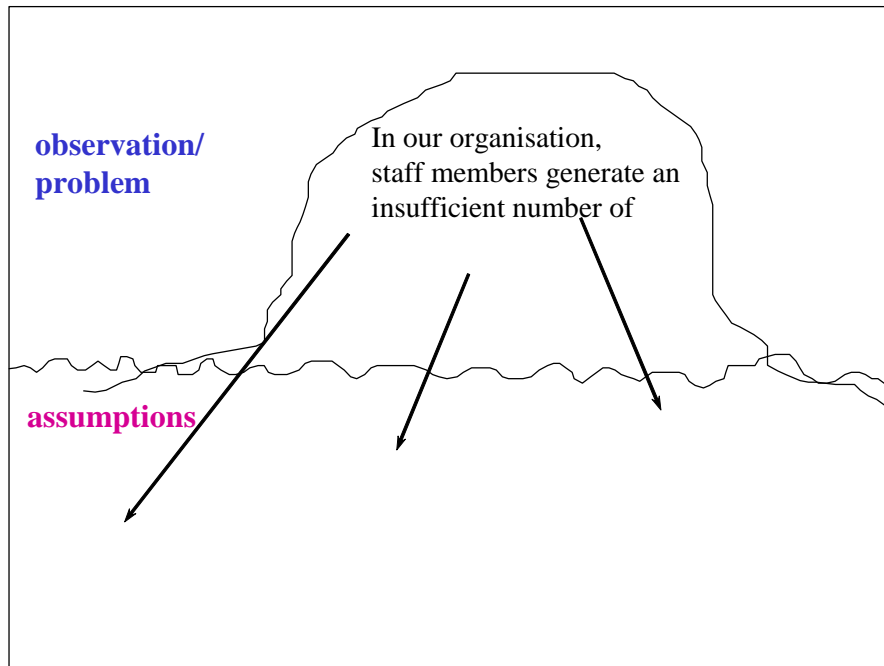


Figure 3: Deepening the thinking – the iceberg principle

It is of great importance to consider these assumptions carefully (and to apply reality checks) since a change in any one of them may shed a completely different light on the issue at hand. An assumption that staff members should annually generate a series of useful ideas may - on second thoughts – well prove to be less than realistic, or even undesirable. It could turn out after careful reconsideration and following discussions within an organisation's management team that the true assumption in fact relates to the notion that it should be a matter of course for each employee to generate ideas and offer suggestions for improvement. If these contain promising ideas, there will be no problem, but if they do not they may still be much appreciated as evidence of a proactive attitude and a willingness to further a good cause. Seen from such perspectives, the original 'problem' (an insufficient number of good ideas) no longer remains an issue.

Apart from studying underlying assumptions, one may also try to define certain concepts and standards that underpin visions, policy options and problems. Just imagine you are attending a conference held by a major international enterprise which acts as one of the most innovative in its field. You are impressed by the company's well-considered approach, but you nevertheless assume that you have not heard enough to apply in your own small organisation of 200 employees. And what is more, your organisation operates in completely different markets. Still, you would be able to extract many useful ideas from the presentation if you deepened your thinking and if you could avoid feeling overly impressed by all the sophisticated measures initiated by a major player in the field. Rather, you should study the concepts behind the measures. You will most likely discover that the lynch pin is formed by concepts such as knowledge-sharing, cross-fertilisation, diversity, time and freedom (for creativity). This perspective will allow you to consider, for the good of your own organisation, how to construct certain measures on the basis of these concepts and

how to tailor them to your organisation's needs in order to enhance business innovation. So, by deepening the thinking and by nourishing multi-level thinking you will discover an abundance of inspiring examples.

Another fruitful technique used to deepen the thinking is the use of paradoxes. A paradox is a statement that is seemingly contradictory, but which is in fact true. It often generates deeper insight into a certain issue. A paradox is created by stating opposites. When, for instance, a business is facing high staff turnover rates, the following paradoxical statement may be formulated: "We shall make staff feel more committed to the company by offering them many exit opportunities." Initially, this would seem to make no sense at all, but it does in fact enable us to deepen our thinking. A closer inspection of the paradox reveals the way ahead, leading to a highly sophisticated staff management programme in which the organisation permanently invests in comprehensive career opportunities for its staff members, internally as well as

